THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure

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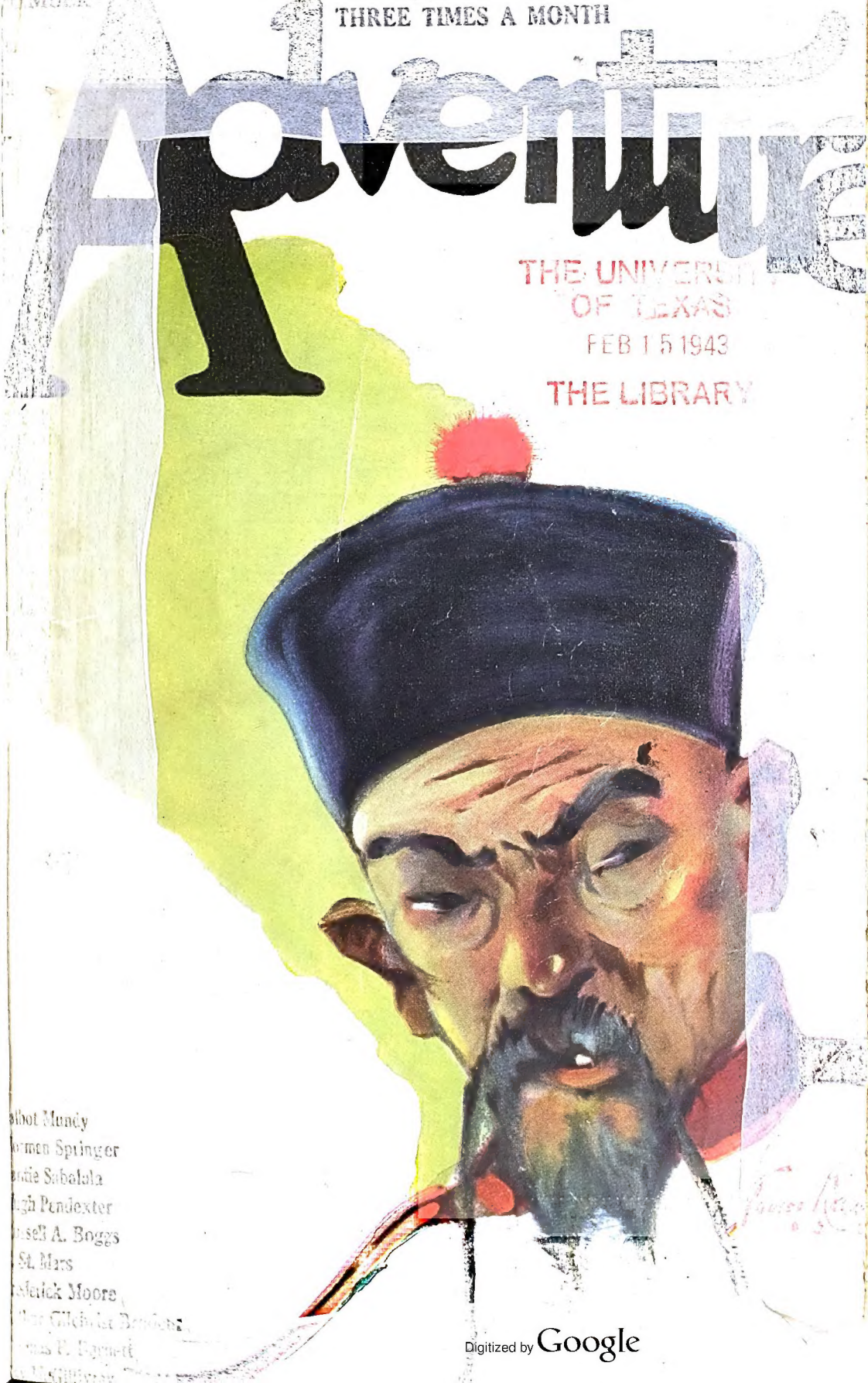

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Soprano High "C"

Without "Metallic" Suggestion

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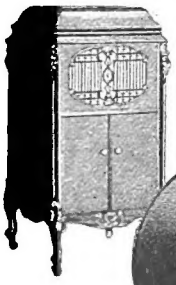

Note: New Brunswick Records are on advance sale at all Brunswick dealers on the 16th of each month in the East, and in Denver and the West on the 20th.

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Hear These Brunswick Super-Feature Records

Each month Brunswick releases from three to six Super-Feature records—the best phonographic music of the month. The current release presents three Metropolitan Opera Company's stars, two of whom, Florence Easton and Giuseppe Danise, make their debut as exclusive Brunswick artists on these records. A notable release.

30011—Ave Maria (Bach-Gounod)..... Florence Easton
30010—Di Provenza il mar (Verdi's "Traviata," Act II, Scene 1)..... Giuseppe Danise
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NOTE—The above records are on sale at all Brunswick dealers in conveniently packed envelopes of three—price $4.00. Or singly, if desired. Hear them by all means.

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ADVENTURE — 1921

Published three times a month by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City. Yearly subscription $6.00 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 1, 1910, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Volume 32
Number 1

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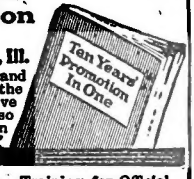

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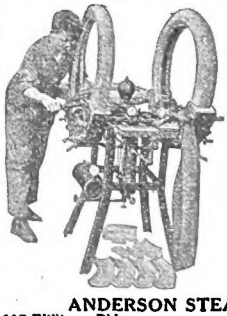

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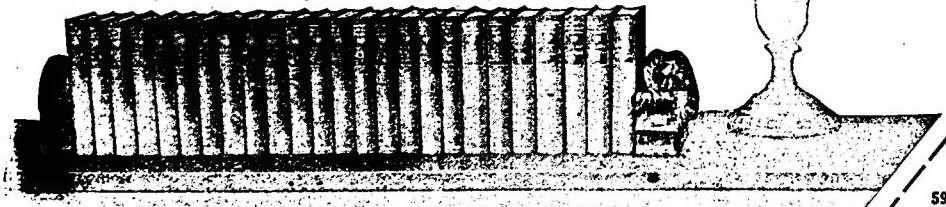

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By Richard W. Samson

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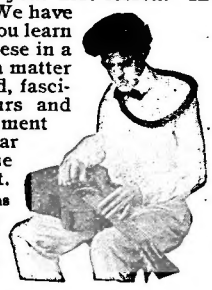

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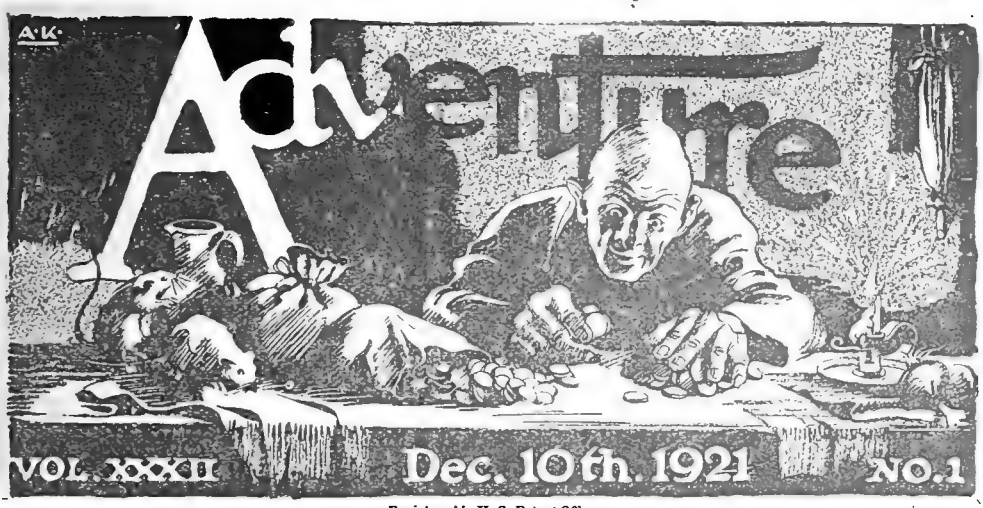

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Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

Don't forget the new dates of issue for *Adventure*—the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month

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UNDER THE DOME OF THE ROCK

A Complete Novelette By TALBOT MUNDY

Author of "Barabbas Island," "The Adventure at El-Kerak," etc.

CHAPTER I

"That old bird will bear watching!"

GRIM was a strange fellow to rub shoulders with. No doubt his unusual position had a lot to do with it; for as an American commissioned in the British army he had to steer a careful course between the Scylla of popularity and the Charybdis of official jealousy. The result of that was that, although he was about the easiest person in Palestine with whom to scrape acquaintance, and was almost invariably courteous, patient without apparent limit and, generally speaking, genial, it was a long time before you were sure he was your friend.

There were times when it was easy to suspect him of simply studying you, in the same way that he studied every detail of the lives of the polylingual swarm who make that land their home; other times when some sudden revelation made you sure that deep was talking to deep and he had given you that privilege that the self-reliant man keeps until the last, of knowing him without his mask on.

I met dozens of people in Jerusalem who spoke as if they knew him intimately, yet I was sure they were wrong; and there were others, who hardly ever spoke of him at all, numbers of them who had no chance of admission into what is called polite society, who could count on his friendship to the last gasp and were sometimes not aware of it.

His official enemies were not only those who naturally enough resented such a coveted and comparatively well paid job in the Intelligence being given to one who was, after all, a foreigner; there were senior officers, too, who reacted to the American spirit, unobtrusive though it was, in the same sort of way that some Americans discover themselves exasperated by the English.

The most difficult thing in the world was to get him to talk about himself and his own view-point. No man with hands and feet like his, and a head set on his shoulders in that alert yet un-self-assertive way, could live and not see life from an independent

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angle; yet you could not discover what that angle was.

No more could you tell the color of his eyes, which were described as gray on the official record. As a rule they looked scholarly—mild, almost blue, good-tempered—under the bushy eyebrows, but they could blaze into hard steel color without the rest of his face or his attitude undergoing any apparent change. And he seemed to observe everything with them, whatever detail might have his attention at the moment, just as he could hear and follow conversation in another language while talking on a totally different subject with some one else. That gift, I think, was allied to his musical talent; he liked to follow the part played by one instrument all through a symphony.

Although I never met a business man quite like him, he always seemed to me to belong in that category—one of those men that the captains of finance pay any price to get. You couldn't imagine him actually owning a big business, because he did not care for power; he never used his rank as major for any other reason than sheer necessity, and the members of his mess, who were all his juniors, invariably called him by his first name. Being saluted bored him, and he frequently omitted to salute his seniors, which now and then got him into trouble. His gift was the swift appraisal of essentials, and an unassertive way of following them up.

YOU wouldn't think that the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel was an essential to the squalling, prematurely born peace that the world has just travailed so painfully to bring forth, or could even be connected with it. The very mention of it brings to mind the Old Testament and intrigues so hoary with the frost of time that even the churchmen nowadays smirk with doubt at mention of them. Yet, if it had not been for James Schuyler Grim and his immense interest in whatever interested anybody else, added to that flair for picking out essentials, the missing Book of the Chronicles would have thrown the world into a worse mess than ever.

"And the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?"

Does it read up to date and important? That short sentence was more full of potential explosion than nitro-glycerin, although the world at large was no more aware of it than the goldfish in a hanging bowl are conscious of the cat. It was set down in the Aramaic language, nowadays called Hebrew, something like three thousand years ago, but the explosion very nearly came to pass in A. D. 1920.

There was a man in Jerusalem named Hugo Scharnhoff, at one time professor of orientology at Vienna University, and now technically an "enemy alien." He had lived for so many years in Jerusalem, and was reputed so studious and harmless that the British let him stay there after Allenby captured the place. A man of more or less private means, he owned a stone house in the German Colony with its back to the Valley of Hinnom.

It was no use trying to guess Grim's motive until he chose to explain it. Sometimes he was simply friendly and entertaining; at others he paid you the compliment of making use of you, but it was invariably profitable to follow his lead in either case.

So when he walked into my room at the hotel in uniform one afternoon and said, "I'm going to call on an Austrian. Care to come?" I did not hesitate.

We trudged together down the dusty Bethlehem Road, turned to the east just short of the Pool of the Sultan (where they delouse the British soldiers nowadays) and went nearly to the end of the colony of neat stone villas that the Germans built before the war, and called Rephaim. It was a prosperous colony until the Kaiser, putting two to two, made five of them and had to guess again.

The house we sought stood back from the narrow road at a corner, surrounded by a low stone-wall and a mass of rather dense shrubs that obscured the view from the windows. The front door was a thing of solid olive-wood, and we had to hammer on it for several minutes, for there was no bell.

A woman opened it at last—an Arab in native costume, gazelle-eyed, as they all are, and quite good-looking, although hardly in her first youth. Her face struck me as haunted, and she was either ashamed when her eyes met Grim's or else afraid of him. But she smiled pleasantly enough and without asking our business led the way at once to a room at the other end of a long hall that was crowded with all sorts of curios. They were mostly stone bric-a-brac—fragments

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of Moabite pottery and that kind of thing, with a pretty liberal covering of ordinary house dust. In fact, the house had the depressing "feel" of a rarely visited museum.

The room she showed us into was the library—four walls lined with books, mostly with German titles—a big cupboard in one corner, reaching from floor to ceiling—a big desk by the window—three armchairs and a stool. There were no pictures, and the only thing that smacked of ornament was the Persian rug on the floor.

WE WAITED five minutes before Scharnhoff came in, looking as if we had disturbed his nap. He was an untidy stout man with green goggles and a grayish beard, probably not yet sixty years of age, and well preserved. He kept his pants up with a belt, and his shirt showed over the top of them. When he sat down you could see the ends of thick combinations stuffed into his socks. He gave you the impression of not fitting into western clothes at all and of being out of sympathy with most of what they represent.

He was cordial enough—after one swift glance around the room.

"Brought a new acquaintance for you," said Grim, introducing me. "I've told him how all the subalterns come to you for Palestinian lore——"

Ach! The young Lotharios! Each man a Don Juan! All they come to me for is tales of Turkish harems, of which I know no more than any one. They are not interested in subjects of real importance. 'How many wives had Djemal Pasha? How many of them were European?' That is what they ask me. When I discuss ancient history it is only about King Solomon's harem that they care to know. But I haven't seen you for a long time, Major Grim. What have you been doing?"

"Nothing much. I was at the Tomb of the Kings yesterday."

Scharnoff smiled scornfully.

"Now you must have some whisky to take the taste of that untruth out of your mouth! How can a man of your attainments call that obviously modern fraud by such a name? The place is not nearly two thousand years old! It is probably the tomb of a Syrian queen named Adiabene and her family. Josephus mentions it. This land is full—every square metre of it—of false antiquities with real names and real antiquities that never have been discovered! But why should a man like you, Major Grim, lend yourself to perpetuating falsity?"

He walked over to the cupboard to get whisky, and from where we sat we could both of us see what he was doing. The cupboard was in two parts, top and bottom, without any intervening strip of wood between the doors, which fitted tightly. When he opened the top part the lower door opened with it. He kicked it shut again at once, but I had seen inside—not that it was interesting at the moment.

He set whisky and tumblers on the desk, poured liberally, and went on talking.

"Tombs of the Kings? Hah! Tomb of the Kings of Judah? Hah! If any one can find that, he will have something more important than Ludendorff's memoirs! Something more priceless than the Koh-i-noor! Something *merkwürdig*, believe me!"

He stiffened suddenly, and looked at Grim through the green goggles as if he were judging an antiquity.

"Perhaps this is not the time to make you a little suggestion, eh?"

Grim's face wrinkled into smiles.

"This man knows enough to hang me anyhow! Fire away!"

"Ah! But I would not like him to hang me!"

"He's close as a clam. What's your notion?"

"Nothing serious, but—between us three, then—you and I are both foreigners in this place, Major Grim, although I have made it my home for fifteen years. You have no more interest in this government and its ridiculous rules than I have. What do you say—shall we find the Tomb of the Kings together?"

Grim wrinkled into smiles again and glanced down at his uniform.

"Yes, exactly!" agreed Scharnhoff. "That is the whole point. They call me an enemy alien. I am to all intents and purposes a prisoner. You are a British officer—can do what you like—go where you like. You wear red tabs; you are on the staff; nobody will dare to question you. These English have stopped all exploration until they get their mandate; after that they will take care that only English societies have the exploration privilege. But what if we—you and I, that is to say—between us extract

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the best plum from the pudding before those miscalled statesmen sign the mandate —eh? It can be done! It can be done!"

"I suppose you already see a picture of you and me with an ancient tomb in our trunks—say a few tons of the more artistic parts—beating it for the frontier and hawking the stuff afterward to second-hand furniture dealers? Pour me another whisky, prof, and then we'll go steal the Mosque of Omar!"

"Ach! You laugh at me—you jest—you mock—you sneer; but I know what I propose. Do you know what will be found in that Tomb of the Kings of Judah when we discover it?"

"Bones. Dry Bones. A few gold ornaments perhaps. A stale smell certainly."

"The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel! Think of it! A parchment roll —perhaps two or three rolls—not too big to go into a valise—worth more than all the other ancient manuscripts in the world all put together! *Himmel!* What a find that would be! What a record! What a refutation of all the historians and the fools who set themselves up for authorities nowadays! What a price it would bring! What would your Metropolitan Museum in New York not pay for it! What would the Jews not pay for it! They would raise millions among them and pay any price we cared to ask! The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel—only think!"

"BUT why the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel in the tomb of the Kings of Judah?" Grim asked him, more by way of keeping up the conversation, I think, than because he could not guess the answer. He is an omnivorous reader, and there is not much recorded of the Near East that he does not know.

"Don't you know your history? You know, of course, that after King Solomon died the Jews divided into two kingdoms. The latter-day Jews speak of themselves as Israelites, but they are nothing of the kind; they are Judah-ites. The tribe of Judah remained in Jerusalem, forming one small kingdom; their descendants are the Jews of today. Part of the tribe of Benjamin stayed with them. The other seceding ten tribes called themselves the kingdom of Israel."

"Everybody knows that," said Grim. "What of it?"

"Well, the Assyrians came down and conquered the kingdom of Israel—marched all the Israelites away into captivity—and they vanished out of history. From that day to this their Book of Chronicles, so often referred to in the Old Testament, has never been seen or heard of."

"Of course not," said Grim. "The King of Assyria used it to wipe his razor on when he was through shaving every morning."

"Ach! You joke again; but I tell you I am not joking. Such people as those Hebrews are, naturally secretive and so proud that they wrote down for posterity all the doings of their puny kings, would never let their records fall into the hands of Assyrians. They themselves were marched away in slave-gangs, but they left their Book behind them, safely hidden. Be sure of it! Ten years ago I found a manuscript in the place they now call Nablus, which in those days was Schechem. Schechem was the capital of the Kingdom of Israel just as Jerusalem was the capital of the Kingdom of Judah, or the Jews. I sold that manuscript for a good price after I had photographed it. The idiots to whom I sold it—historians they call themselves!—value it only as a relic of antiquity. I made a digest of it—analyzed it—studied it—compared it with other authentic facts in my possession —and came to the definite conclusion that I hold the clue to the whereabouts of that lost Book of Chronicles."

"Let's see the photograph," suggested King.

"It has been impounded with other so-called 'enemy property' by your friends the British. I suppose they thought the German General Staff might get hold of it and conquer the Suez Canal! But what good would the sight of it do? You couldn't understand a word of it. It convinced me, after months of study, that when the ten tribes were carried away into captivity by the Assyrians they sent their records secretly to Jerusalem. Ever since the secession the Israelites and Jews had been jealous enemies, but they were relatives after all, boasting a common ancestor, proud of the same history, more or less observing the same religion. And Schechem was only about thirty miles from Jerusalem, which was considered an impregnable fortress until the Babylonians took it later on. So they sent their records to Jerusalem, and

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the Jews hid them. Where? Where do you suppose?"

"The likeliest place would be Solomon's Temple."

"You think so? Then you think superficially, my young friend. Let us return to that Tomb of the Kings again for a moment. That place that you visited is such an obvious fake that even the guide-books make light of it. The one all-important thing in Palestine that never yet has been discovered is the real Tomb of the Kings. Yet Jerusalem, where it certainly must be, has been searched and looted a hundred times from end to end. Therefore—you follow me?—the Jews must have concealed it very cunningly. Answer me, then: would the Jews, who were always a practical people and not corpse-worshippers like the Egyptians, take all that trouble to hide the tomb of their kings unless there were important treasure in it? Answer me!"

"So you expect to find treasure in addition to the lost Book of Chronicles?"

"Certainly I do! The treasure will make the whole proceeding safe. Let the British have it! The fools will be so blinded by the glamor of it that I shall easily extract the things of real value—the invaluable manuscripts! *Then* let the men who call themselves historians take a back seat!"

He rubbed his hands together in anticipation. It was clear he thought more of the ancient records, and the intellectual confounding of rival historians, than of the money they would bring.

"Were you looking for the Tomb of the Kings, then, before the war?" Grim asked him.

"NOT exactly. Under the Turks it was difficult. They were beautifully corrupt. By paying for it I could get permission to excavate on any property owned by Christians; but the minute I touched Moslem places they became fanatical. The Arabs, now, are different—fanatics, too, but with a new sort of fanaticism—new to them, I mean—the kind that made the French revolutionists destroy everything their ancestors had set value on. There are plenty of Arabs so full of this disease of Bolshevism that they would make it easy for me to desecrate what others believe is holy ground. But these idiots of English are worse than the Turks! They have stopped *all* excavation. They are so afraid of Bolshevism that, if they could, they would imitate Joshua and make the sun stand still!"

"Well, what's the idea?" asked Grim, finishing his whisky.

Scharnhoff shrugged his shoulders.

"You know my position. I am helpless—here on suffrance—obliged by idiotic regulations to sit in idleness. But if I could find a British officer with brains—surely there must be one somewhere!—one with some authority, who is considered above suspicion, I could show him, perhaps, how to get rich without committing any crime he need feel ashamed of."

I could not see Grim's eyes from where I sat, and he did not make any nervous movement that could have given him away. Yet I was conscious of a new alertness, and I think Scharnhoff detected it, too, for he changed his tactics on the instant.

"Hah! Hah! I was joking! Nobody who is fool enough to be a professional soldier would be clever enough to find the Tomb of the Kings and keep the secret for ten minutes! Hah! Hah! But I have a favor I would like to beg of you, Major Grim."

"I've no particular authority, you know."

"Ach! The Administrator listens to you; I am assured of that."

"He listens sometimes, yes, then usually does the other thing. Well, what's the request?"

"A simple one. There is risk—not much, but just a little risk that some fool might stumble on that secret of the Tomb of the Kings and get away with the treasure. Now, did you ever set a thief to catch a thief? Hah! Hah! I would be a better watch-dog than any you could find. I know Jerusalem from end to end. I know all the likely places. Why don't you get permission for me to wander about Jerusalem undisturbed and keep my eye open for tomb-robbers? If I am not to have the privilege of discovering that Book of Chronicles, at least I would like to see that no common plunderer gets it, and perhaps destroys it. Surely I am known by now to be harmless! Surely they don't suspect me any longer of being an agent of the Kaiser, or any such nonsense as that! Why not make use of me? Get me a permit, please, Major Grim, to go where I please by day or night without interference. Tomb-robbers usually work at night, you know."

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"All right," said Grim. "I'll try to do that."

"Ah! I always knew you were a man of good sense! Have more whisky? A cigar then?"

"Can't promise anything, of course," said Grim, "but you shall have an answer within twenty-four hours."

Outside, as we turned our faces toward Jerusalem's gray wall, Grim opened up a little and gave me a suggestion of something in the wind.

"That old bird will bear watching. Did you see what he has in that cupboard?"

"Yes. Two Arab costumes and two short crow-bars."

"Did you notice the grayish dust on the rug—three or four foot-prints at the corner near the cupboard?"

"Can't say I did."

"No. You wouldn't be looking for it. The extraordinary thing to my mind always is that these men who pose as intellectuals can never believe that any one else has brains. They fool themselves by talking down to you. And they do the most ridiculously stupid things. There's just one thing that no man can afford to do, East of the sun or West of the moon. You can steal, slay, intrigue, burn—break all the Ten Commandments except one, and have a chance to get away with it. There's just one thing, in the East particularly, that you can't do and succeed as a crook. He's done it!"

"And the one thing is?"

"Get mixed up with a woman!"

"You mean this house-keeper? She who answered the door?"

Grim nodded.

CHAPTER II

"You know you'll get scuppered if you're found out!"

I DID not see Grim again for several days, although I called on him repeatedly at the "Junior Staff Officers' Mess" below the Zionist Hospital. Suliman, the eight-year-old imp of Arab mischief, who did duty as page-boy when it suited him, met me on each occasion at the door and took grinning delight in disappointing me.

He was about three and a half feet high, that limb of dark iniquity—coal-black, with a tarboosh worn at an angle on his kinky hair and a flashing white grin across his snub-nosed face that would have made an archangel count the change out of two piastres twice. Suliman and cool cheek were as obvious team-mates as the Gemini, and I was one of a good number that included every single member of that unofficial mess, who could never quite see what Grim found so admirable in him. Grim never explained.

Taking the cue from his master, neither did Suliman ever explain anything to any one but Grim, who seemed to understand him perfectly.

"Jimgrim not here. No, not coming back. Much business. Good-by!"

Somehow you couldn't suspect that kid of telling the truth deliberately. However, there was nothing for it but to go away, with a conviction in the small of your back that he was grinning mischievously after you.

Grim had found him one day starving and lousy in the archway of the Jaffa Gate, warming his fingers at a guttering candle-end preparatory to making a meal off the wax. He took him home and made Martha, the old Russian maid-of-all-work, clean him with kerosene and soft soap—gave him a big packing-case to sleep in along with Julius Cæsar the near-bull-dog mascot—and thereafter broke him in and taught him things seldom included in a school curriculum.

In the result, Suliman adored Grim with all the concentrated zeal of hero-worship of which almost any small boy is capable, but under the shadow of Grim's protection feared not even "brass-hats" nor regarded civilians, although he was dreadfully afraid of devils. The devil-fear was a relic of his negroid ancestry, some Arab Sheikh having captured his grandfather on a slave-raid; the superstition lingers in dark veins longer than any other human failing.

I think I called five times before he confessed at last reluctantly that Grim was in. That was one morning after breakfast, and I was shown into the room with the fireplace and the deep armchairs. Grim was reading as usual, but seemed to me more than usually reserved, as if the book had been no more than a screen to think behind that left him in a manner unprotected when he laid it down. I talked at random, and he hardly seemed to be listening.

"Say," he said, suddenly interrupting me, "you came out of that El-Kerak affair*

* "The Adventure at El-Kerak," which appeared in the November 10th issue.

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pretty creditably. Suppose I let you see something else from the inside; will you promise not to shout it all over Jerusalem?"

"You bet!"

"You mustn't ask questions."

"All right."

"If any one in the Administration pounces on you in the course of it, you'll have to drop out and know nothing."

"Agreed."

"It may prove about as risky as the El-Kerak business."

"More people die in bed than anywhere," I said. "Go on."

"You can't talk enough Arabic to get away with, but could you act deaf and dumb?"

"Sure—in three languages."

"You understand—I've no authority to let you in on this. I might catch —— if I was found out doing it. But I'm going to need help, of a certain sort, and I want a man who isn't likely to be spotted by the gang I'm after. Get behind that screen—quick!"

IT WAS a screen that hid a door leading to the pantry and the servants' quarters. There was a Windsor chair behind it, and it is much easier to keep absolutely still when you are fairly comfortable. I had hardly sat down when a man wearing spurs, who trod heavily, entered the room and I heard Grim get up to greet him.

"Are we alone?" he asked gruffly.

Instead of answering Grim came and looked behind the screen, opened the door leading to the pantry, closed it again, locked it, and without as much as a glance at me returned to face his visitor.

"Well, general, what is it?"

"How was it I couldn't get hold of you over the phone last night, Major Grim? I called you five or six times. They told me each time you were 'out somewhere.' What does that mean?"

"I received no word that I was wanted at the phone."

"Doubtless! Gadding, I suppose! What was it—wine or women?"

"Better ask the Administrator."

"Don't be insolent to me, sir!"

"I don't waste time being insolent. If I'd time, I'd make you an offer."

"What d'you mean?"

"I've two pairs of gloves in my room upstairs."

"Are you threatening me?"

"No—giving you a chance to do the right thing. I'd hate for you to go around thinking you'd insulted me without a dog's chance to make proper amends. You've done it before, you know. Of course, a brigadier can't take a licking in public from a major, but as man to man—alone—upstairs in my room—nobody would know, and you'd feel more like a white man afterwards."

"That's no way to talk to me. However—I daresay I'm a bit nervous, and let my temper get the better of me."

"You've no call to feel worried about that. My offer is open any time you care to take it up."

"You're a queer fish, Grim. Very well, I'll give you a private thrashing the minute I've got time. Meanwhile, I've urgent business. This is strictly secret."

"It must be," said Grim. "I got the whole story last night, but go ahead and tell me."

"My ——! You know it already? Two tons of TNT intended for the air force gone without a trace? The story's out?"

"I'm the only one that knows up here. Catesby sent me word by messenger last night from Ludd, after you put him under arrest."

"—— the man! Well, that's what's happened. It's Catesby's fault, but they'll blame me. The truck containing the stuff was run into a siding three days ago. Through young Catesby's negligence it was left there without a guard, and Catesby is going to be broke for that as sure as my name is Jenkins. But, by the knell of —— bell, Grim, there's more than Catesby will lose their jobs over this unless we can find the stuff! Two tons is half-enough to blow up Palestine!"

"Too bad about Catesby," said Grim.

"Never mind Catesby. Consider my predicament! How can I go to the Administrator with a lame-duck story about missing TNT and nothing done about it?"

"Nothing done? You've passed the buck, haven't you? Catesby is under arrest, you say."

"——! What do you mean?"

"I know Catesby real well. He made that fine stand at Beersheba—that time when the Arabs rushed the camp, and you weren't looking. He took the blame for your carelessness, and never squealed; you took the

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credit for his presence of mind, and have treated him like a dog ever since. You expect me to try to save your bacon and forget Catesby's?"

"Nonsense, Grim! You're talking without your book. Here's what happened: the stuff arrived at Ludd in a truck attached to the end of a mixed train. The R. T. O.* sent me a memorandum and stalled the truck on a siding. I gave the memorandum to Catesby——"

"He tells me in the note I received last night that you did nothing of the kind."

"Then he's a liar, that's all! He simply forgot all about it and did nothing. When the Air Force sent to get the stuff the truck was empty."

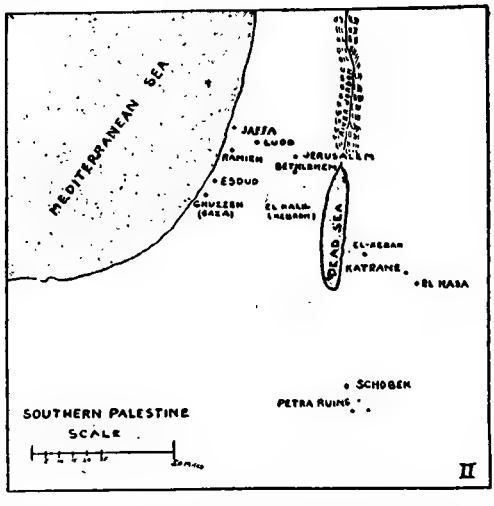
"And you want me to find it, I suppose?"

"Yes. The quicker the better!"

"And be a party to breaking Catesby? Not on your life, general! I like my job, but not that much!"

"You mean, you refuse to hunt for the TNT?"

"The Air Force shall have it under lock and key within forty-eight hours, unless



you bull-buffalo about and scare the thieves into exploding it. But I take my orders straight from the Administrator, and report to him direct. He expects me in half an hour. You came to me first because you want me to smooth the way for you with Kettle. I'm much more interested in straightening out Catesby's tangle.

"Catesby is no cheap-skate, he's a white man; I know him. He'd face a firing party sooner than soak another fellow for his fault. When Catesby assures me in writing that the first he ever heard of that TNT was when you ordered him arrested after discovery of the loss, his word goes as far as I'm concerned. If you want me to help you, you've got to find another goat than Catesby, and now you know the last word on that point!"

THERE followed quite a long pause. Perhaps Brigadier-General Jenkins was reviewing his own past and wondering what chance he would stand in a show-down. Whoever had heard the mess and canteen gossip knew that Jenkins' career had been one long string of miracles by which he had attained promotion without in any way deserving it, and a parallel series of even greater ones by which he had saved himself from ruin by contriving to blame some one else.

"You won't help me unless I cover Catesby?"

"Not a bit of it. I make no conditions. But as long as Catesby is under arrest on a trumped-up charge, I tell you flatly I shall fight to clear him, whether that ruins you or not. Drop the charge against Catesby, and I shall be much more keen on tracking the stolen stuff and avoiding scandal than on making trouble for any one."

"If you pounce quickly on the TNT," said Jenkins, "the public never need know that it was lost."

"And if you court-martial Catesby, the public shall know who lost it, and who didn't, even if it costs me my commission!"

"—— you!"

"Suit yourself!"

"This is sheer mutiny!"

"All right," Grim answered. "Is your car outside? Why don't you drive me up to the Administrator and charge me with mutiny?"

"Don't be an idiot! I came to you to avoid a scandal. If this news gets out there'll be a panic. Things are touchy enough as it is."

"Suit yourself!" repeated Grim.

"Well—if I drop the charge against Catesby—?"

"Then I shall not have to fight for him."

"I'll see what I can do."

"Better be more definite!"

"—— and blast you! All right, I'll clear Catesby."

*Railway Traffic Officer.

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In that ominous minute, like the devil in an old-time drama, Suliman knocked at the door leading from the outer hall. Grim opened it, and I heard the boy's voice piping up in Arabic. The Administrator was in his car outside, waiting to know whether Major Grim was indoors.

"Where's your car?" I heard Grim ask.

"I sent the man to get a tire changed," Jenkins answered.

"Then Kettle needn't know you're here. Do you want to see him?"

"Of course not."

"You can get behind that screen if you like."

I thought Jenkins would explode when he found me sitting behind there. He was a big, florid-faced man with a black mustache waxed into points, and a neck the color of rare roast beef—a man not given to self-restraint in any shape or form. But he had to make a quick decision, for Kettle's footsteps were approaching, and as a matter of fact there wasn't really any doubt what he would do.

A man who habitually blames other men for his own mistakes can be counted on to take the line of least resistance in any emergency. He glared at me, made a sign to me to sit still, twisted his mustache savagely, and listened, breathing through his mouth to avoid the tell-tale whistle of his hairy nostrils. I heard Grim start toward the hall, but Kettle turned him back and came straight in.

"It occurred to me I'd save you the time of coming up to see me this morning, Grim, and look in on you instead before I start my rounds. Any new developments?"

"Not yet, sir. As I told you, I'll need forty-eight hours. If we move too fast they may touch the stuff off before we get the whole gang in the net."

"You're sure you'd rather not have the police?"

"Quite. They mean well, but they're clumsy."

"Um-m-m! All the same, the thing's ticklish. There are rumors about already. The Grand Mufti* came to me before breakfast with a wild tale. I've promised him some Sikhs for special sentry duty. He'd hardly gone before some Zionists came with a story that the Arabs are planning to blow up their hospital; so I gave them ten men and an officer."

"Is the city quiet?" Grim asked him.

"Fair to middling. The Jews refused to take their shutters down this morning. I had to issue an order about it. I hear now that they're doing business about as usual, but I've ordered the number of men on duty within the city walls to be doubled. At the first sign of disturbance I shall have the gates closed. Are you quite sure you're in touch?"

"Quite sure, sir. No danger yet if we keep still. I'm positive of what I told you last night. Will you be seeing Colonel Goodenough?"

"Yes, in ten minutes."

"Please ask him to hold his Sikhs at my disposal for the next two days. You might add, sir, that if he cares to see sport he could do worse than offer me his own services."

"I'll do that. I'm sure you can count on Goodenough. That's a soldier devoid of nonsense. Anything else?"

"That's all."

"Keep me informed. Remember, Grim, I'm responsible for all you do. I've endorsed you in blank, as it were. Don't overlook that point."

"I won't, sir."

KETTLE walked out. Almost before his spurs ceased jingling in the tiled hall, Brigadier-General Jenkins strode out in a towering rage from behind the screen.

"A fine state of affairs!" he exploded. "'Pon my soul, a spy's trick! Had an eavesdropper, did you? Listening from behind a screen while you tricked me into a promise on Catesby's account!"

"Sure," Grim answered, folding the screen back, and letting his face wrinkle in smiles all the way up to the roots of his hair. Very comical he looked, for his eyebrows were only partly sprouted again from his last adventure. "Had two of 'em to listen in on Kettle!"

"Endorses you in blank, eh? How long would he let the endorsement stand if he knew I was behind that screen while he was talking to you?"

"Try him!" Grim suggested. "Shall I call him back? He doesn't want to break you—told me so, in fact, last night—but you can thrash it out if you'd rather. Say: do you ever take advice from a junior in rank? My tip to you is to get back to Ludd as fast as your car can take you, release

* The religious head of the Moslem community.

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Catesby, and say as little as possible to any one!"

"—— you for an impertinent Yankee!" Jenkins retorted. "You've got me cornered for the moment, and choose to make the most of it, don't you? All right! But wait till my turn comes!"

"Don't forget those gloves upstairs—any time you like, you know!" said Grim.

"As for you, sir," Jenkins turned and looked me up and down with all the arrogance that nice new-crossed swords on his shoulder can give a certain sort of man, "don't let me catch you trying to interfere in any Administration business, that's all!"

I offered him a cigaret, for I was in no position to blame him. No man likes to discover that a perfect stranger has overheard his intimate confessions. But he hadn't nice manners. He knocked the case out of my hand to the floor and kicked it across the room, so I got into one of the deep armchairs and laughed at him in self-defense, having a perfectly good ground for quarrel with him of my own now.

"To —— with both of you!" he thundered, and strode out like Mars on the war-path.

"Poor old Jinks!" said Grim, as soon as he had gone. "As Kettle said last night, he has a wife and family beside the unofficial ladies on his string. But all they'll have to divide between them soon, at the rate he's going, will be his half-pay. He has fought for promotion all his days, to keep abreast of expenses. What that string of cormorants will do with his four hundred pounds a year, when he oversteps at last and gets retired, beggars imagination! However, let's get busy."

BUSINESS consisted in dressing me up as an Arab with the aid of Suliman, and drilling me painstakingly for half-an-hour, both of them using every trick they knew to make me laugh or show surprize, and Grim nodding approval each time I contrived not to. More difficult than acting deaf and dumb was the trick of squatting with my legs crossed, but I had learned it after a fashion in India years ago, and only needed schooling.

"You know you'll get scuppered if you're found out," he warned me. "If Suliman wasn't so scared of devils I wouldn't risk it, but I must have somebody to keep an eye on him when the time comes; that'll be tomorrow, I think."

"Suppose you tell me the object of the game," I suggested. "I'm sick of only studying the rules."

"Well—your part will be to sit over those two tons of TNT and see that nobody explodes them ahead of time."

I suspected that two pounds of that stuff would be just as dangerous as a hundred tons, and said so.

"For you, yes. But it happens that there's a little conspiracy on foot to blow up the Dome of the Rock. Do you realize what that means?"

"You mean the Mosque of Omar?"

"The place tourists call the Mosque of Omar, yes—the site of Solomon's Temple—the Rock of Abraham—the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite. Next after the shrine at Mecca it's the most sacred spot in the whole Mahommedan world."

"Good Lord!" I said. "Are the Zionists as ruthless as that?"

"No, the Arabs. Remember what old man Scharnhoff said the other day about the new fanaticism?"

"Is Scharnhoff mixed up in it?"

"More or less. He's being well watched. Do you see what it amounts to, if they pull it off? They'll accuse the Jews of doing it, and set to work to butcher every Jew in the Near East. That will oblige the British to protect the Jews, and that in turn will set every Mahommedan in the world—'specially Indians, but Egyptians too—against the British. Jihad—green banner—holy war—all the East and Northern Africa alight! Sound good to you?"

"And Kettle knows all this?"

"You bet he does."

"And he lets you play cat and mouse with it?"

"Sugar that! Kettle's wise. Suppose we draw the net too soon, what then? Most of the conspirators escape. The story leaks out. The Jews get the blame for the attempt, and sooner or later the massacre begins anyhow. What we've got to do is bag every last mother's son of them, and suppress the whole story—return the TNT to store, and swear it was never missing."

"Kettle and you have got your nerve," I said.

"You'll need yours, too, before this game's played," he answered. "D'you see now why I picked on you for an accomplice?"

"I do not."

"You're the one man in Jerusalem whom

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nobody will suspect, or be on the look-out for. The men we're up against are the shrewdest rats in Palestine. They've got a list of British officers, my name included, of course, and they'll know which men are assigned to special duty and keep them shadowed."

"Won't that—I mean, how can you work if you're shadowed?"

"Me? I shall catch my spur in the carpet, fall down-stairs and break a leg at ten-fifteen. At ten-thirty the doctor comes, and finds me too badly hurt to be moved. He sends word of it to Kettle by an orderly who can be trusted to talk to any one he meets on the way. I leave by the back way at ten-forty-five. However, here's a chance for you to practise deaf-and-dumb stuff; there's some one coming. Squat down in that corner—look meek and miserable—that's the stuff. Answer the door, Suliman."

CHAPTER III

"You may now be unsafe and an outlaw and enjoy yourself!"

THE man who entered was a short, middle-aged Jew of the type that writes political reviews for magazines—black morning coat, straw hat, gold pince-nez—a neatly trimmed dark beard beginning to turn gray from intense mental emotion—nearly bald—a manner of conceding the conventions rather than argue the point, without admitting any necessity for them—a thin-lipped smile that apologized for smiling in a world so serious and bitter. He wore a U. S. A. ten-dollar gold piece on his watch chain, by way of establishing his nationality.

"Well, Mr. Eisernstein? Trouble again? Sit down, and let's hear the worst," said Grim.

Eisernstein remained standing and glanced at me over in the corner.

"I will wait until you are alone."

"Ignore him—deaf and dumb," Grim answered. "Half a minute, though—have you had breakfast?"

"Breakfast! This is no time for eating, Mister—I beg your pardon, Major Grim. I have not slept. I shall not break my fast until my duty is done. If it is true that the Emperor Nero fiddled while Rome burned, then I find him no worse than this Administrator!"

"Has he threatened to crucify you?" Grim asked him. "Take a seat, do."

"He may crucify me, and I will thank him, if he will only in return for it pay some attention to the business for which he draws a salary! I drove to Headquarters to see him. He was not there. Nobody would tell me where he is. I drove down again from the Mount of Olives and luckily caught sight of his car in the distance. I contrived to intercept him. I told him there is a plot on foot to massacre every individual of my race in the Near East—a veritable pogrom. He was polite. He seems to think politeness is the Christian quality that covers the multitude of sins. He offered me a cigar!

"I offered him a telegram blank, with which to cable for reenforcements! He said that all rumors in Jerusalem become exaggerated very quickly, and offered me a guard of one soldier to follow me about! I insisted on immediate military precautions on a large scale, failing which I will cable the Foreign Office in London at my own expense. I offered to convince him with particulars about this contemplated pogrom but he said he had an urgent appointment and referred me to you, just as Nero might have referred a question regarding the amphitheater to one of his subordinates!"

"Pogroms mean nothing in his young life," Grim answered smiling. "I'm here to do the dirty work. Suppose you spill the news."

"You must have heard the news! Yet you ignore it! The Moslems are saying that we Zionists have offered two million pounds, or some such ridiculous sum, for the site of Solomon's Temple. They are spreading the tale broadcast. Their purpose is to stir up fanaticism against us. The ignorant among them set such value on that rock and the mosque their cutthroat ancestors erected on it that Jews are now openly threatened as they pass through the streets. Yet there is not one word of truth in the story of our having made any such offer."

"There are plenty of troops," said Grim. "Any attempt at violence could be handled instantly."

"Then you will do nothing?"

"What do you suggest ought to be done?"

"Here is a list. Read it. Those are the names of fifty Arabs who are active in spreading anti-Zionist propaganda."

Grim read the list carefully.

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"All talkers," he said. "Not a really dangerous man among them."

"Ah! There you are! I might have expected it!" Eisernstein threw up his hands in a gesture of contempt rather than despair. "Nobody cares what happens to Jews. Nobody cares for our sleepless agony of mind. Nobody cares how or what we suffer—until afterward, when there will be polite expressions of regret, which the survivors will assess at a true valuation! It is the same wherever we turn. Last night—at half-past one in the morning—a committee of us, every one American, called at the American consulate to tell him of our danger. The consul was unsympathetic in the last degree. Yet our coreligionists in the States are taxed to pay his salary. He said it was not his business. He referred us to the Administrator. The Administrator refers me to you. To whom do you refer me? To the devil, I suppose!"

"The best thing you can do," said Grim, "is to go ahead and deny that story about the offer to buy the Dome of the Rock. You Zionists have got the most efficient publicity bureau on earth. You can reach the public ear any time you want to. Deny the story, and keep on denying it."

"Ah! Who will believe us? To be a Zionist is to be a person about whom anybody will believe anything; and the more absurd the lie, the more readily it will be believed! Meanwhile, the Moslems are sharpening their swords against us from one end of this land to the other!"

I SUPPOSE that what Eisernstein really needed more than anything was sympathy, not good advice. Grim's deliberate coolness only irritated the passion of a man, whose whole genius and energy were bent on realizing the vision of a nation of Jews firmly established in their ancient home. A people that has been tortured in turn by all the governments can hardly be expected to produce unnervous politicians. A man at the mercy of emotions, obsessed by one paramount idea, a little praise just then of his loyalty to an ideal, to which he had sacrificed time, means, health, energy, everything, would have soothed him and hurt nobody. But the acidity of his scorn had bitten beneath the surface of Grim's good humor.

"There'll be no pogrom," Grim said, getting up and lighting a cigaret. "There'll be nothing resembling one; but that won't be the fault of you Zionists. You accuse without rime or reason, but you yell for help the minute you're accused yourselves. I don't blame the Arabs for not liking you. Nobody expects Arabs to enjoy having their home invaded by an organization of foreigners; yet if this Administration lifts a finger to make things easier for the Arabs you howl that it's unfair.

"If the Administrator refuses to arrest Arabs for talking a little wildly, you call him a Nero. I'm neither pro- nor anti-Zionist myself. You and the Arabs may play the game out between you for all of me. But I can promise you there'll be no pogrom, for it's my business to know just what precautions have been taken."

"Words! Major Grim. Words!" sneered Eisernstein, getting up to go. "What do words amount to, when presently throats are to be cut? If your throat were in danger, I venture to say there would be something doing, instead of mere talk about precautions! I hope you will enjoy your little cigaret," he added bitterly. "Good morning!"

"Talk of fiddling while Rome burns!" laughed Grim as soon as the Zionist had left the room. "Has it ever occurred to you that Nero was possibly smothering his feelings? I wonder how long there'd be one Zionist left out here, if we simply stood aside and looked on. Go and change your clothes, Suliman. It's time I broke a leg."

Grim disappeared upstairs himself, and returned about ten minutes later in the uniform of a Shereefian officer—that is to say, of Emir Feisul's Syrian army. Nothing could be smarter, nor anything better calculated to disguise a man; for disguise, as any actor or detective can tell you, is not a matter of overloading properties so much as suggestion. It is little mannerisms—unstudied habits that identify. The suggestion that you are some one else is the thing to strive for, not the concealment of who you really are.

Grim's skin is rather dark in any case, for he was sun-tanned in the Arab campaign under Lawrence against the Turks. The Shereefian helmet is a compromise between the East and West, having a khaki strip of cloth hanging down behind it as far as the shoulders and covering the ears on either side, to take the place of the Arab headdress; and the khaki uniform has just

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enough of Oriental touch about it to distinguish it from that of a British officer.

No man inexperienced in disguise would dream of choosing it; for the simple reason that it would not seem to him disguise enough. Yet Grim now looked so exactly like somebody else that it was hard to believe he was the same man who had been in the room ten minutes before. His mimicry of the Syrian military walk—blended of pride and desire not to seem proud—was perfect.

"I'm now staff-captain Ali Mirza of Feisul's army," he announced. "He's a man notorious for his anti-British rancor, but supposed to be down here just now on a diplomatic mission. I've been seen about the streets like this for the last two days. But say: that doctor is a long time on the way."

He went to the telephone, but did not call the hospital; that would have been too direct and possibly secret.

"Give me Headquarters — yes — who's that?—never mind who's speaking—say: I can't get the military hospital—something wrong with the wire—will you call Major Templeton and say that Major Grim has had an accident—yes, Grim—compound fracture of the thigh—very serious—ask him to go at once to Major Grim's quarters—thanks—that's all."

He returned to the fireplace and stood watching me meditatively for several minutes.

"If you deceive Templeton, you'll do," he said at last. "Wait a minute."

HE WENT to the desk and scribbled something in Arabic on an envelope, inserted a piece of blank paper, and sealed it up. On second thought he tore that up, covered one side of another sheet of paper with Arabic writing, and sealed that in a blank envelope, which he handed to me.

"Hide it. You've got two separate and quite distinct tasks, each more important and, in a way, dangerous than the other. The principal danger is to me, not you; because if they once suspect you they'll get wise to me, and my number's as good as hoisted from that minute. But you mustn't kid yourself you're safe for one second until the last card has been played."

"Who are 'they'?"

"I'm coming to that. Your first job is to make it possible for me to get the confidence of one or two of these conspirators. So you're a deaf and dumb man—stone deaf, remember! It is the only safe thing to be—with a message for staff-captain Ali Mirza, which you will only deliver to him in person. Suliman does all the talking. You say nothing. You simply refuse to hand your message over to any one but me. They'll appreciate why a deaf and dumb man should be chosen for treasonable business. But perhaps you're scared—maybe you'd rather reconsider it? It's not too late."

"Man! Would you send me back to Broadway now to mope over an adventure I might have had? If you'll risk the big end, I'll dare the little one."

"All right. These conspirators meet at Djemal's coffee shop on David Street. They talk to one another in French, because the proprietor and the other frequenters of the place only know Arabic. You know French and Arabic enough to understand a sentence here and there, so keep your ears wide open. I shan't show up until a Sikh named Narayan Singh tells me that a certain Noureddin Ali is in there. He's the bird I'm after. He's a dirty little murderer, and I'm going to be right pleasant to him.

"You may have to sit in the place all day waiting for me; but wait until after midnight, if you must. Sooner or later Noureddin Ali is bound to show up, and I shall be hard after him. If they offer you food, take it, and eat with your fingers; eat like a pig; lick the plate, if you like; the nearer mad you seem to be the safer you are. After I get there, hang around until I give you money; then beat it."

"Where to. I can't go to my room at the hotel in this disguise."

"I've thought of that. You know Standard Oil Davey, of course? He lives at the hotel. I'll get word to him that he may expect a messenger from me after dark tonight; he'll leave word with the porter downstairs, who'll take you to Davey's room. You can tell Davey absolutely anything. He's white."

"Well, I think I can execute that maneuver. What's task number two?"

"To sit on the TNT! But one thing at a time is enough. Let's attend to this one first. Ah! Here comes Templeton at last!"

"—— you, Grim!" said a calm voice in the doorway, and a tall, lean man in

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major's uniform with the blue tabs of the medical staff strode in. He had the dried-out look of the Sudan added to the self-reliance that comes of deciding life and death issues at a moment's notice.

"The hospital is crowded with patients, and here you immobilize me for half a morning. I can't pretend to set a compound fracture in ten minutes, you know! Why couldn't you break your neck and have me sign a death certificate?"

"Didn't occur to me," said Grim. "But never mind, doc. You need a rest. Here's tobacco, lots to read, and an armchair. Lock yourself in and be happy."

"Who's this?" asked Templeton, looking down at me.

"Deaf and dumb poor devil, earning a few piastres by working for the Intelligence."

"Spy, eh? He looks fit for honest work if he had all his faculties. Is he dumb as well as deaf, or because he's deaf?"

"Dunno," said Grim. "He never speaks."

"Perhaps I can do something for him. Suppose you leave him here with me. I can give him a thorough examination instead of wasting my time here."

"He's got a job of work to do right now," said Grim.

"Does he know the sign language? Have you any way of telling him to come and see me at the hospital?"

"I give him written instructions in Arabic."

"That so? I'll look at his ears—tell you in a minute whether it's worth his while to come to me."

He took my head between strong, authoritative hands and tilted it sidewise.

"Hello! What's this?"

The Arab headdress I was wearing shifted and showed non-Arab symptoms.

"Open that bag of mine, will you, Grim, and pass me that big pair of forceps you'll find wrapped in oiled paper on top of everything. There's something I can attend to here at once."

IT WAS an uncomfortable moment. Grim never cracked a smile, but dug out the instrument of torture and gave it to Templeton. But there were two points that occurred to me, in addition to the knowledge that nothing whatever was the matter with my ear. Doctors in good standing, who are usually gentlemen, don't operate without permission; and the forceps were much too big for any such purpose. So I sat still, and said nothing.

"Um-m-m! What he really needs is a red-hot needle run down close to the ear-drum. It wouldn't take five minutes, or hurt him—much. After that I think he'd be able to hear perfectly. Suppose we try."

"I can wait ten minutes yet," Grim answered.

"Very well. I've a platinum needle in the bag. I'll get out the spirit-lamp and we'll soon see. To be candid with you, I don't believe the man's any more deaf than you or I."

"If you run a hot needle through the lobe of his ear we'll find out whether he can really talk or not," said Grim in his pleasantest voice. "If he's shamming I don't mind. What we need in this service is a man who can endure without betraying himself."

"Well, we'll soon see."

I began to hate Grim pretty cordially. I hated him more when Suliman came in, dressed for the street in a rather dirty cotton smock, with a turban in place of his fez, and he told the boy to hold the wooden handle of a paper-knife behind my ear to prevent the hot needle from going too far on its sizzling journey. It didn't seem to me the way to reciprocate volunteer secret service. And Suliman's grin at the prospect of seeing a man tortured was enough to provoke murder. I brushed the boy aside, fly-fashion, got up, crossed the room, and sat down again in the corner.

"Good enough!" laughed Grim. "You'll do."

"Yes, I think he'll do," agreed Templeton.

But I took no notice. I had seen too many games lost and won with the last card. Templeton looked down at Suliman:

"Tell him the game's over. He may talk now."

"*Mafish mukhkh!**" he answered, grinning and tapping his own forehead. "*Magnoon!*†"

"I think you can trust them both," said Templeton.

"Going to chance it, anyhow," said Grim, smiling in my direction. "All right, old man; time out! If you'd spoken once there'd have been nothing more between you and a life of safety and respectability!"

"Whereas," said Templeton, "you may now be unsafe and an outlaw and enjoy yourself! Are you sure they haven't marked him?" he asked Grim.

* No brains.
† Mad.

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"Sure! Why should they suspect a tourist? But I've taken precautions. Word is on the way to the hotel to forward all his mail to Jaffa until further notice." He laughed at me again. "I hope you're not expecting any important letters!"

Suliman had evidently been well schooled in advance, for at a nod from Grim he came over and took my hand, as if I were blind in addition to the other supposed infirmities, and led me out by a back-door, across a yard into an alley, which we followed as far as a main road and then turned toward the Jaffa Gate. Looking back once I saw Grim in his Shereefian uniform striding along behind us; but where the road forked he took the other turning.

THERE is a delight that satisfies in walking in disguise through crowded streets, even when you are in tow of eight-year-old iniquity that regards you as a lump of baggage to be pushed this and that way. Suliman plainly considered me a rank outsider, only admitted into the game on sufferance. Having said I was *"magnoon"* he lived up to the assertion, and warned people to make way for me if they did not want to be bitten and go mad too; so as a general rule I received a pretty wide berth.

But it was fun, in spite of Suliman. It was like seeing the world through a peep-hole. Men and women you knew went by without suspecting they were recognized, and in a puzzling sort of way the world, that had been your world yesterday, seemed now to belong wholly to other people, while you lived in a new sphere of your own.

We had to go slowly as we approached the Jaffa Gate, for the crowd was dense there, and a line of Sikhs was drawn across the gap where the street passes through the city wall—the gap they made by tearing down the wall to let the Kaiser through, when he made that famous pilgrimage of his. The Sikhs were searching all comers for weapons, and we had to wait our turn.

Outside the gate, on the left-hand as you faced it, was the usual line of boot-blacks—the only cheap thing left in Jerusalem—a motley two dozen of ex-Turkish soldiers, recently fighting the British gamely in the last ditch, and now blacking their boots with equal gusto, for rather higher pay. Some of them still wore Turkish uniforms. Two or three were red-headed and blue-eyed, and almost certainly descended from Scotch crusaders. (For the Scots do leave their traces in the world they soldier through.)

The rest of the crowd were mainly peasantry with basket-loads of stuff for market, although there was a liberal sprinkling among them of all the odds and ends of the Levant, with a Jew here and there, the inevitable Russian priest, and a dozen odd lots, of as many nationalities, whom it would have been difficult to classify.

And there was Constable Bedreddin Shah; you could not have missed seeing him, although I did not learn his name until afterward. He came swaggering down the Jaffa Road with all the bullying arrogance of the newly enlisted Arab policeman, and shoved me aside among others. He was on his way to the lock-up that stands just inside the gate, and I wished him a year in it, but nothing as vindictive as turned out to be in store for him.

As he plunged into the crowd that checked and surged immediately in front of the line of Sikhs, a small man in Arab costume with the lower part of his face well covered by the *kaffiyi**, rushed out from the corner behind the boot-blacks and drove a long knife home to the hilt between the policeman's shoulder-blades.

Bedreddin Shah shrieked once and fell forward. Blood gushed from the wound. The crowd surged in curiously, and then fell back before the advancing Sikhs. A British officer who had heard the victim's cry came spurring his horse into the crowd from inside the gate, bent on giving first-aid, but only adding to confusion.

And the murderer, who seemed in no particular hurry, dodged quietly in and out among the swarm of bewildered peasants, and in thirty seconds had utterly disappeared. A minute later I saw Grim offering his services as interpreter and stooping over the dying man to try to catch the one word he was struggling to repeat.

CHAPTER IV

"Windy believes without hearts in them."

DJEMAL'S coffee shop is run by a Turkish gentleman whose real name is Yussuf, and that one short handle was quite enough for him in the days when Djemal Pasha ran Jerusalem with iron

*Head-dress that hangs down over the shoulders.

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ruthlessness, and consequent success of a certain sort. When Djemal was the Turkish Governor, every proprietor of every kind of shop had to stand in the doorway at attention whenever Djemal passed, and wo betide the laggard!

It would not have paid any one, in those days, to take that distinguished name in vain. Even the provider of the rope that throttled the offender would have made no profit, because the rope would simply have been looted from the nearest store; and the hangman would have been the nearest soldier, whose pay was already two years in arrears. So Yussuf's own name done in Turkish characters used to stand over the door before the British came.

But it was Djemal Pasha's considered judgment that Yussuf cooked the best coffee in Jerusalem. So whenever the despot was in the city he conferred on Yussuf the inestimable privilege of supplying him with coffee at odd moments, under threat of the bastinado if the stuff were not suitably sweet and hot.

The only money that ever changed hands in that connection was when the tax-gatherer came down on Yussuf for an extra levy, because of the added trade that conceivably might be expected to accrue through the advertisement obtained by serving such an exalted customer. The tax-gatherer also threatened the bastinado; and as the man who likes the prospect of that punishment, or who could soften the heart of a Turkish tax assessor, has yet to be discovered, Yussuf invariably paid.

But when Allenby conquered Palestine between bouts of trying to tame his Australians, and Djemal Pasha scooted hotfoot into exile with a two-hundred-woman harem packed in lorries at his rear, Yussuf remembered that old adage about better late than never, and put up Djemal's name on the stone arch of the narrow door near the foot of David Street. He did it partly out of the disrespect that a small dog feels for a big one that is now on chain; but he was not overlooking the business value of it.

The first result was that he did quite a lot of trade with British officers, who came primarily because they were sick of eating sand and bully-beef, and drinking sand and tepid water in the desert. Later they flocked there by way of paying indirect homage to a governor who, whatever his obvious demerits, had at any rate never been answered back or thwarted with impunity. (There was a time, after the capture of Jerusalem, when, if the British army could have voted on it, Djemal Pasha would have been brought back and given a free hand.)

But the officers began to discover that Yussuf was charging them four or five times the proper price. The seniors objected promptly, and deserted, to the inexpressible delight of subalterns; but even the underpaid, extravagant youths grew tired of extortion after a month or two, and Yussuf had to look elsewhere for customers.

Yussuf did some thinking behind that genial Turkish mask of his. There are more coffee shops in Jerusalem than hairs on a hog's back, and the situation, down near the bottom of that narrow thoroughfare in the shadow of an ancient arch, did not lend itself to drawing crowds.

But there were others in Jerusalem besides British officers who yearned for Djemal's rule again; and, unlike the irreverent men in khaki, they did not dare voice their feelings in public. All the old political grafters, and all the would-be new ones savagely resented a régime under which bribery was not permitted; and, as always happens sooner or later, they began to show a tendency to meet in certain places, where they might talk violence without risk of incurring it.

So Yussuf permitted a rumor to gain ground that he, too, was a malcontent and that the British had deserted his coffee-shop for that reason. He gave out that Djemal Pasha's name over the door stood for reaction and political intrigue. So his place began to be frequented by *effendis* in *tarboosh* and semi-European clothes, who could chew the cud of bitterness aloud between walls that the crusaders had built four feet thick. The only entrance was through the narrow front door, where Yussuf inspected every visitor before admitting him.

So Yussuf's "Café Djemal Pasha" was the place to go to for politics, of the red-hot, death-and-dynamite order that would make Lenine and Trotzky sound like small-town sports. But first you had to get by Yussuf at the door.

Suliman led me by the hand down David Street, through the smelly-yelly moil of barter, past the meat and vegetable stalls, beneath crusader arches from which Jewish

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women peered through trellised windows, across three transverse lanes of the ancient *suku*,* and halted at Yussuf's door.

He rapped on it three times, and when Yussuf's wrinkled face appeared at last he demanded to see Staff-Captain Ali Mirza. Yussuf's blood-shot eyes peered at me for a long time before he asked a question.

"*Atrash!*†—*akhras!*‡—*majnoon!*" ‖ said Suliman. Describing me as mad seemed to give him particular delight. He never overlooked a chance of doing it.

"Staff-Captain Ali Mirza is not here. What should a madman want with him?"

"He is not very mad—only stupid. He carries a message for the captain."

"But the captain is not here. He has not been here."

"He will come."

"How should a deaf and dumb man deliver a message?"

"It is in writing."

"Very well. He may leave the writing with me. If the captain comes I will deliver it."

"No. The message is from Esh-Sham (Damascus). He will give it only into the captain's own hand."

"What is your name?"

"Suliman."

"What is his?"

"—— knows! He came with another man by train; and the other man, who is much more mad than this one, gave me five piastres to bring this one to your *kahwil*"§

Yussuf shut the door, and discussed the proposition with his customers. At the end of two or three minutes his head appeared again.

"You say Staff-Captain Ali Mirza is expected here?"

"So said the man at the station."

"What do you know of Staff-Captain Ali Mirza?"

"Nothing."

Once more the door closed and I could hear the murmur of voices inside—but only a confused murmur, for the door was thick. When it opened again two other heads were peering from behind Yussuf's.

"Has he money?" he asked.

"*Kif? Ma indi khabar!*" (How should I know?)

Yussuf opened the door wide and made a sign for me to enter. He seemed in two minds whether to let Suliman come in with me or not, but finally admitted him with a gruff admonition to keep still in one place and not talk.

The place was fairly full. It was a square room, with one window high in the wall on David Street. Around three sides, including that on which was the front door, ran a wooden seat furnished with thin cushions. Facing the front door was another one leading to a dark hole in the rear, where pots were washed and rice was boiled; beside that door, occupying most of the length of the fourth wall, was a thing like an altar of dressed stone, on which the coffee was prepared in dozens of little copper pots.

The benches being all pretty well occupied, I was about to squat down on the floor, but they made room for me close to the front door, so I squatted on the corner of the bench and tucked my legs under me. Suliman dropped down on the floor in front of me with his head about level with my knees.

The other occupants of the room were all Syrian Arabs—not a Bedouin among them. All of them wore more or less European clothing, with the inevitable *tarboosh*, each set at a different angle. You can guess the mentality of the Syrian by the angle of that red Islamic symbol he wears on his head. The black tassel always hangs behind, and the steady-going conservatives and all who take their religion seriously, wear the inverted flower-pot-shaped affair as nearly straight up as the cranium permits.

But once let a Syrian take up new politics, join the Young Turk Party, forswear religion, or grow cynical about accepted doctrine and the angle of his *tarboosh* shows it, just as surely as the angle of the London Cockney's "bowler" betrays irreverence and the New York gangster's "lid" asserts rebellion.

The head-gears were set at every possible angle in that coffee-shop of Yussuf's, from the backward tilt of the breezy optimist to the far-forward thrust down over the eye of malignant cynicism, which usually went with folded arms, legs thrust out straight, and heels together on the floor.

* Bazaar.
† Deaf.
‡ Dumb.
‖ Mad.
§ Coffee-pot.

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YUSSUF brought me coffee without waiting to be asked. I paid him a half-piastre for it, which is half the proper price, and utterly ignored his expostulation. He touched me on the shoulder, displayed the coin in the palm of his hand, and went through a prodigious pantomime. I did not even try to appear interested. He ordered Suliman to explain to me.

"*Mafish mukhkhl*" said the boy, touching his own forehead.

My real motive was to act as differently as possible from the white man, who always pays twice what he should. By establishing the suggestion of accustomed meanness, I hoped to offset any breaks I might make presently. Spies, and people of that kind, usually have plenty of money for their needs, so that by acting the part of a man unused to spending except in minute driblets I stood a better chance of not being detected.

But I was in luck; and I have often noticed, so that it has become almost an article of creed with me, that luck invariably breaks that way. It almost never turns up blind. You sit down and wait for luck, and it all goes to the other fellow; but you start to use your wits, even clumsily, and the luck comes along and squanders itself on you.

"He is certainly from Damascus," laughed one of the customers. "The price is a half-piastre in Damascus at the meaner shops."

I did not know anything about Damascus then—had never been there; but from that minute it never entered the mind of one of those men to doubt that Damascus was my home-city, so easily satisfied by trifling suggestions is the unscientific human. Yussuf went back to his charcoal stove grumbling to himself in Turkish.

But there was still one question in doubt. They seemed satisfied that I was really deaf and dumb, but in that land of countless mission-schools and alien speech there is always a chance that even children know a word or two of French. They tested Suliman with simple questions, such as who was his mother and where was he born; but he did not need to act that part, he was utterly ignorant of French.

So they proceeded to ignore the two of us and turn their political acrimony loose in French, discussing the maddest, most unmoral schemes with the gusto of small boys playing pirates. There seemed to be almost as many rival political parties as men in the room. The only approach to unity was when they agreed to accuse and destroy. As for constructive agreement, they had none, and every one's suggestion for improvement was sneered at by all the rest. They were not even agreed about the Zionists, except hating them; they quarreled about what would be the best way to take advantage of them before wiping them out of existence.

But they all saw exquisite humor in the item of news that Eisernstein had taken so to heart.

"That was Noureddin Ali's idea! He is a genius! To accuse the Zionists of offering two million pounds for the Dome of the Rock—ah! who else could have thought of it! The story has spread all through Jerusalem, and is on its way to the villages. In two days it will be common gossip from Damascus to Beersheba. In a week it will be known from end to end of Egypt; then Arabia; then India! Ho! When the Indian Moslems get the news—the Indian troops in Palestine will send it by mail—then what a furor! Then what anger! That was finesse! That was true statesmanship! Never was a shrewder genius than Noureddin Ali!"

"Don't shout his name too loud," said somebody. "The Administration suspects him already."

"Bah! Who in this room is a friend of the Administration? Besides, there is only one man in Jerusalem of whom Noureddin is in the least afraid—that Major Grim, the American. And whoever would give the price of a cup of coffee for a lease of the life of Major Grim in the circumstances would do better to toss the money to the first beggar he meets!"

"Hssh!"

"Hah! All the same, I would not choose to be Noureddin's enemy."

"There is another who will share that opinion—or so I have heard. I was told that Bedreddin Shah, a recent recruit in the police, stumbled by accident on certain evidence and demanded a huge sum for silence. Hee-hee! How much will anybody give Bedreddin Shah for his prospect?"

"Hssh!"

"What did Bedreddin Shah discover?"

"Nobody knows."

"You mean nobody will tell."

"The same thing."

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"How long could a secret be kept in Jerusalem, if you people were informed of what is going on? You are good for propaganda, that is all! You can talk—Allah! how you all talk! But as for doing anything, or keeping a secret until a thing is done, you are no better than magpies."

THE last speaker was a rather fat man, over in the corner by the scullery door. He had a nose like Sultan Abdul Hamid's and large, elongated eyes that looked capable of seeing things on either side of him while he stared straightforward. Even in that dark corner you could see they had the alligator-hue that one associates with cruelty, and he had the massive shoulders and forward-stooping position as he sat cross-legged on the seat that suggest deliberate purpose devoid of hurry.

They all resented what he said, but none seemed disposed to quarrel with him. One or two remonstrated mildly, but he ignored their remarks, busying himself with digging out a cigaret from a gold case set with jewels; after he had lighted it very thoughtfully and examined the end once or twice to make sure that it burned just right, he let it hang between his lips in a way that accentuated the angle of his bulbous nose. You wondered whether he owned a harem, and what the ladies thought of him.

"Will you sit and brag in here all day?" he asked after a few minutes. "Yussuf must be getting rich, you sip so much coffee. It is not particularly good for Yussuf to get rich; it will make him lazy, as most of you are."

The chattering had ceased, although there were several attempts to break the uncomfortable silence with inane remarks. His ravenish, unpleasant voice seemed to act on the company like a chill wind, depriving treason of its warm sociableness but leaving in the sting.

"I said you are good for propaganda," he resumed, tossing away ash with a reflective air. "But even that has no value within four walls. If Noureddin Ali should come and learn from me how much talking has been done in here, and how little done outside, I can imagine he will not be pleased. Are there no other *kahawi?** Why is that story about the Zionists and their offer to buy the Dome of the Rock not being spread diligently? You like the safety of this place with its four thick walls. But I tell you the jackal has to leave his hole to hunt."

They did not like taking orders, even when they were expressed more or less indirectly; no follower of the new political freedom does like it, for it rather upsets the new conceit. But he evidently knew his politicians, and they him. They got up one by one and made for the door, each offering a different excuse designed to cover up obedience under a cloak of snappy independence. Not one of them drew a retort from him, or as much as a farewell nod.

When the last one was gone, and the process took up all of half-an-hour, he sat and looked down his nose at me for several minutes without speaking. You could have guessed just as easily what an alligator was thinking about, and I tried to emulate him, pretending to go off into the brown study that the Turks call *kaif*, out of which it is considered bad manners to disturb your best friend, let alone a stranger. But manners proved to be no barrier in his case.

He began talking to me in Arabic—directly at me, slowly and deliberately, but I did not understand very much of it and it was not difficult to pretend I did not hear. However, Suliman was in different case; the boy began to get very restless under the monolog, and I tugged at his back hair more than once to remind him of the part he had to play.

Discovering that the Arabic took no effect on me, the alligator person changed to French.

"They speak French in Damascus. I know you are not deaf. You are a spy. I know your name. I know what your business was before you came here. I know why you want to see the staff-captain. You have a letter for him; I know what is in it. No use trying to deceive me; I have ways of my own of discovering things. Do you know what happens to spies who refuse to answer my questions? They are attended to. Quite simple. They receive attention. Nobody hears of them again.

"There are drains in Jerusalem—big, dark, smelly, ancient, full of rats—very useful drains. You think the Staff-Captain Ali Mirza will protect you. At a word from me he will make the request that you receive immediate attention. You will disappear down a drain, where even Allah will forget that you ever existed. Staff-Captain Ali

* Coffee-shops.

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Mirza is my old friend. Better let me see that letter."

I FELT like laughing at the drain threat, although Suliman was still shivering from the effect of the earlier Arabic version. But the statement that he knew the real Ali Mirza might be true, in which case Grim's attempt to understudy him was not going to last long. However, the fact that he had not yet seen through my disguise was some comfort, and, the wish being father of the thought, I decided he was bluffing first and last. But he had not finished yet. He tried me in English.

"The captain will give that letter to me in any case. It is intended for me. I have other business now, and wish to save time, so give it to me at once. Here, I will give you ten piastres for it."

He pulled out a purse and unfolded a ten-piastre note. I took no notice. He shook it for me to see, and I awoke like a pelican at the sight of fish.

"Yours for that letter," he said, shaking it again.

I nudged Suliman and nodded to him. He crossed the room, seized the ten-piastre note, and brought it back to me. I stowed it away under my shirt.

"Come, now give me the letter."

I took utterly no notice, so he turned his attention to Suliman again, and resumed in Arabic.

"Feel in his pocket and find the letter."

"I am afraid," the boy answered.

"Of what? Of him? I will protect you. Take the letter from him."

Suliman chose to play the small boy, as he could very well indeed when nothing could be gained by being devilish and ultra-grown-up. He shook his head and grinned sheepishly.

"Has he any weapons?" was the next question.

"*Ma in.li khabar.*" (I don't know.)

Evidently assault and battery was to be the next item on the program. He had not the eyes or the general air of a man who will part with ten piastres for nothing. He called to Yussuf, who came hurrying out of the scullery place. They held a whispered conference, and Yussuf nodded; then he came over to the front door and locked it, removing the key.

"Tell him to hand over that letter!" he ordered Suliman.

"*Mafish mukhkhl!*" said the boy, tapping his forehead once more.

Suliman's notion was the right one after all—at any rate the only one available. Old alligator rolled off his perch and started for me, and Yussuf timed a spring to correspond. They would have landed on me simultaneously, if Suliman had not reminded me that madness is a safe passport nearly anywhere in the East.

So I went stark, raving mad that minute. I once spent a night in the room of an epileptic who had delirium tremens, and learned a lot from him; some of it came to mind just then when I needed it, and if ever a man got ten piastres' worth of unexpected side-show it was that old Syrian with the alligator eyes. By the time I was quite out of breath there wasn't a cushion or a coffee-pot fit for business, and Suliman was standing out of reach on the bench in a corner yelling with laughter, while the two men struggled to get through the scullery door, which was too narrow to admit them both at once. I earned that ten piastres. By the same token I did not let the *kaffiyi* fall off my head and betray my western origin.

Unable to think up any more original motions, and having breath for none, I sat on the floor and spat repeatedly, having seen a madman do that on the Hebron Road and get feared, f not respected for it. There seems to be a theory prevalent in that part of the world that the sputum of a madman is contagious.

But I overdid it. Most amateurs do overdo things.

THEY got so afraid that they decided to put me out into the street at all costs, where those enemies of society, the police, might demonstrate their ingenuity. Yussuf made a dash for the front door, and I suppose he would have called in help and ended my share in the adventure, if something had not happened.

The "something" was Noureddin Ali—very much something in his own opinion.

"Why didn't you open the door sooner?" he demanded. "I have been knocking for two minutes."

He watched Yussuf lock the door again behind him, and then eyed the dishevelled room with amused curiosity. He was a rat-faced little man dressed in a black silk jacket, worsted pants and brown boots, with the inevitable red *tarboosh* set at an angle of

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sheer impudence—a man at least fifty years old by the look of him, but full of that peppery vigor that so often clings to little men in middle life. On the whole he looked more like a school-teacher, or a lawyer than a conspirator; but Yussuf addressed him with great deference as "Noureddin Ali Bey," and even old alligator-eyes became obsequious.

Both Yussuf and the other man began explaining the situation to him in rapid-fire Arabic, I meanwhile recovering from the fit as fast as I dared and trying to remember how to do it. Noureddin Ali was plainly for having me thrown out, until they mentioned the name of Staff-captain Ali Mirza; at that he tried to cross-examine Suliman at great length, but could get nothing out of him. Suliman had evidently overheard Grim talking about Noureddin Ali, and was very much afraid of him.

"All right," Noureddin Ali said at last. "No more business today, Yussuf. Keep the door locked, but admit the captain; we must find out what this message is about."

Yussuf went to tidying up the place, while Noureddin Ali and the alligator person talked excitedly in low tones in the corner near the scullery door. I lay on the floor with one eye open, expecting Grim every minute; but it must have been four in the afternoon before he came, and all that while, with only short intervals for food and coffee, Noureddin and the other man talked steadily, discussing over and over again the details of some plan.

Shortly after midday Suliman began to whimper for food. Yussuf produced a mess of rice and mutton, of which the two Syrians ate enormously before giving any to the boy; then they put what was left in the dish on the floor in front of me, pretty much in the way you feed a dog, and I hate to remember what I did to it. It is enough that I did not overlook Grim's advice to eat like a lunatic, and however suspicious of me Noureddin Ali might otherwise have been he was satisfied at the end of that performance.

SEVERAL people tried the door, and some of them made signals on it but Yussuf had a peep-hole where one of the heavy iron nails had been removed, and after a cautious squint through it at each arrival he proceeded to ignore them. One man thundered on the door for several minutes, but was allowed to go away without as much as a word of explanation.

That was the first incident that made me feel quite sure Noureddin Ali was in fear of the police; all the time the thundering was going on he glanced furtively about him like a rat in a trap, and I saw him feel for a weapon under his vest; when the noise ceased and the impatient visitor went away he sighed with relief. The place was certainly a trap; there was no back way out of it.

When Grim came at last he knocked quietly, and waited in silence while Yussuf applied his eye to the nail-hole. When he entered, the only surprizing thing about him seemed to me the thinness of his disguise. In the morning, when I had seen him change in ten minutes from West to East, it had seemed perfect; but, having looked for him so long with the Syrian disguise in mind, it seemed impossible now that any one could be deceived by it. He was at no pains to keep the *kafiyi* thing close to his face, and I held my breath, expecting to see Noureddin Ali denounce him instantly.

But nothing of that sort happened. He sat down, thrust his legs out in front of him, leaned back, and called for coffee. It was obvious at once that the alligator person had been lying when he boasted of knowing Staff-Captain Ali Mirza, for he made no effort to claim acquaintance or to denounce him as an impostor. But he nodded to Suliman, and Suliman came over and nudged me.

I let the boy go through a lot of pantomimic argument before admitting that I understood, but finally I crossed the room to Grim and offered him the envelope. He looked surprized, examined the outside curiously, spoke to me, shrugged his shoulders when I did not answer, tossed a question or two to Suliman, shrugged again and tore the letter open. Then his face changed, and he glanced to right and left of him as if afraid of being seen. He stuffed the letter into his tunic pocket and I went back to the corner by the front door.

Yussuf was pottering about, still rearranging all the pots and furniture that I had scattered, but his big ears projected sidewise and suggested that he might have another motive. However, it was a simple matter to evade his curiosity by talking French, and Noureddin Ali could contain himself no longer.

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"Pardon me, sir? Staff-Captain Ali Mirza?"

Grim nodded suspiciously.

"I have heard of you. We have all heard of you. We are proud to see you in Jerusalem. We wish all success to your efforts on behalf of Mustapha Kemal, the great Turkish Nationalist leader. Our prayer is that he may light such a fire in Anatolia as shall spread in one vast conflagration throughout the East!"

"Who are you?" asked Grim suspiciously. (Evidently the real Ali Mirza had a reputation for gruff manners.)

"Noureddin Ali Bey. It may be you have heard of me. I am not without friends in Damascus."

"Oh, are you Noureddin Ali?" Grim's attitude thawed appreciably. "We have been looking for more action and less talk from you. I made an excuse to visit Jerusalem and discover how much fire there is under this smoke of boasting."

"Fire! Ha-ha! That is the right word! There is a camouflage of talk, but under it—Aha! You shall see!"

"Or is that more talk?"

"We are not all talkers. Wait and see!"

"Oh, more waiting? Has Mustapha Kemal Pasha waited? Has he not set you all an example of deeds without words? Am I to wait here indefinitely in Jerusalem to take him news of deeds that will never happen?"

"Not indefinitely, my dear captain! And this time there will really be a deed that will please even such a rigorous lover of action as Mustapha Kemal!"

Grim shrugged his shoulders again.

"I leave for Damascus at dawn," he said cynically. "I don't care to be mocked there for bringing news of promises. We have had too many of those barren dams. I shall say that I have found everything here is sterile—abortive—windy bellies without hearts in them!"

CHAPTER V

"I'll have nothing to do with it!"

NOUREDDIN ALI was pained and upset by that assertion. Grim had sent a thrust home where he kept his susceptibilities. He blinked, peered this and that way, exchanged glances with the alligator person, and then tucked his legs up under him.

"In me you see a doer!" he announced; and he looked the part. His lean, pointed nose and beady little eyes were of the interfering, meddling type. You could not imagine him, like the yellow-eyed ruminant next to him, sitting and waiting ruthlessly for things to happen. He was rather liable to go out and be ruthless.

"So they all say!" Grim retorted.

"They should know in Damascus what a deed will occur here presently. Above all, word should reach Mustapha Kemal."

"All day long," said Grim, "I have wandered about Jerusalem, listening to this and that rumor of something that may happen. But I have not found one man who can tell me a fact."

"That is because you did not meet me. I am—hee-hee! I am the father of facts. You say you leave for Damascus at dawn? You are positive? I could tell you facts that would put a sudden end to my career if they were spread about Jerusalem!"

"That is the usual boast of men who desire credit in the eyes of the Nationalist Party," Grim retorted.

"I see you are sceptical. That is a wise man's attitude, but I must be cautious, for my life is at stake. Now—how do you propose to leave Jerusalem? There is no train for Damascus at dawn tomorrow."

"I am on a diplomatic mission," answered Grim. "The Administration have placed a car at my disposal to take me as far as the border."

"Ah! And tonight? Where will you be tonight?"

"Why?"

"Because I propose to make a disclosure. And—ah—hee-hee!—you would like to live, I take it, and not be sent back to Damascus in a box? I have—ah—some assistants who—hee-hee!—would watch your movements. If you were to betray me afterward to the Administration, there would remain at least—the satisfaction—of—you understand me?—the certainty that you would suffer for it!"

Grim laughed dryly.

"I shall be at the hotel," he answered. "In bed. Asleep. The car comes before dawn."

"That is sufficient. I shall know how to take essential precautions. Now—you think I am a man of words, not deeds? You were near the Jaffa Gate this morning, for I saw you there. You saw a man killed—a

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policeman, name Bedreddin. That was an unwise underling, who stumbled by accident on a clue to what I shall tell you presently. He had the impudence to try to blackmail me—me, of all people! You saw him killed, but did you see who killed him? I—I killed him, with this right hand! You do not believe? You think, perhaps, I lack the strength for such a blow? Look here, where the force of it broke my skin on the handle of the knife! Now, am I a man of words, not deeds?"

"You want me to report to Mustapha Kemal that all the accomplishment in Jerusalem amounts to one policeman killed?"

"No, no! You mistake my meaning. My point is that having proved to you my penchant for action, I am entitled to be believed when I tell you what next I intend to do."

"Well—I listen."

"There is going to be—hee-hee!—an explosion!"

"Where? When? Of what?"

"In Jerusalem, within a day or two, and of what? Why, of high explosive, what else?"

"MUCH good an explosion in this city will do Mustapha Kemal!" Grim grumbled. "You may kill a few beggars and break some windows. The British will double the guards afterward at all the city gates, and that will be the end of it; except that some of you, who have not yet been thrown in jail, will apply to Mustapha Kemal for high commissions in his army on the strength of it! Great doings!"

"Hee-hee! You are going to be surprized. What would you say to an explosion, for instance, that destroyed the Dome of the Rock?"

"That might accomplish results."

"Hee-hee! You admit it! An explosion to be blamed on the Zionists, who must afterward be protected by the British from the mob! Would that not set India on fire?"

"It might help. But who is to do it?"

"I! You see the man before you!"

"If I thought such a thing was really going to take place——"

"You would think that news worth carrying, eh? You would hurry to Damascus, wouldn't you? And let me assure you, my dear captain, speed is essential. There are reasons why the explosion has not yet occurred—reasons of detail and difficulties to be overcome. But now there is little further prospect of delay. Everything is nearly ready. The explosive is not yet in place, but is at hand. The authorities suspect nothing. There remains only a little excavation work, and then—hee-hee!—nothing to do but choose the hour when hundreds are in the mosque. Houp-la! Up she goes! Does not the idea appeal to you?"

"Sensational—very," Grim admitted.

"Ah! But the utmost must be made of the sensation. Men must be ready in Damascus to stir public feeling on the strength of it. Word must go to Mustapha Kemal to strike hard while the iron is hot. There must be reprisals everywhere. Blood must flow.

"The Europeans, French as well as British, must be goaded into making rash mistakes that will further inflame the populace. It must be shouted from the housetops that the Jews have blown up a Moslem sacred place, and that the British are protecting them. There must be a true *jihad** proclaimed against all non-Moslems almost simultaneously everywhere. Do you understand now how swiftly you must travel to Damascus?"

Grim nodded.

"Yet these foreigners are cunning. Are you sure your plan is not suspected?"

"Quite sure. There was one man—a cursed interfering jackanapes of an American, whom they all call Jimgrim, of whom I was afraid; for he snooped here and there, and knows how to disguise himself. But he fell downstairs this morning and broke his thigh in two places."

"That might be a trick to put you off your guard," Grim suggested pleasantly.

"No, for I made discreet enquiries. He is in great pain, and may lose the leg. The doctor who has charge of the case is a Major Templeton, an irritable person and, like most of the English, too big a fool to deceive anybody. No, luckily for Mister Jimgrim it is not a trick, for otherwise he would have shared the fate today of Bedreddin Shah the constable. The trap was all ready for him. With him out of the way there is nothing to be feared. Now—pardon me, Captain Ali Mirza, but that letter you received just now; would you like to show it to me?"

"Why?" demanded Grim, frowning, and bridling all over.

"Hee-hee! For the sake of reciprocity.

* Holy war.

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I have told you my secret. If it were not that I am more than usually circumspect, and accustomed to protect myself, one might say that my life is now in your hands, captain. Besides—hee-hee!—I might add that Jerusalem is my particular domain. I would have no difficulty in seeing that letter in any case. But there should be no need for—hee-hee!—shall we call them measures? between friends."

"I see you are a man of resource," said Grim.

"Of great resource, with picked lieutenants. May I see the letter now?"

Grim produced it. Noureddin Ali took it between spidery fingers and examined it like a schoolmaster conning a boy's composition. But the expression of his face changed as he took in the contents, holding the paper so that alligator-eyes could read it too.

"Who wrote this?" he asked.

"Can't you read the signature? Enver Eyub."

"Who is he?"

"One of Mustapha Kemal's staff."

"So. 'In pursuing your mission you will also take steps to ascertain whether or not Noureddin Ali Bey is a person worthy of confidence'. Aha! That is excellent! So Mustapha Kemal Pasha has heard of me?"

Grim nodded.

"And the rest of your mission?"

"Is confidential."

"And are you satisfied that I am to be trusted?"

"I think you mean business."

"Then you should tell me what is the nature of your secret mission to Jerusalem. Possibly I can give you needed information. If you have obtained information of value, you should confide in me. I can be most useful when I know most."

GRIM frowned, and began to look uneasy; and the more he did that the more delight Noureddin Ali seemed to take in questioning him.

"The trouble with the Nationalist movement," he insisted, "is lack of unity. There is no mutual confidence—consequently no combination. There are too many intellects working at cross purposes. You should tell me what is being done, so that I may fit in my plans accordingly. When the Dome of the Rock has been blown up there will be ample opportunity for putting into execution a combined plan. You must confide in me."

"Suppose I get rid of that messenger and the boy first."

Grim felt in his pocket and produced a purse full of bank-notes. But they were all big ones.

"Never mind, I have change," said Noureddin Ali. "How much will you give him?"

"No," said Grim. "The boy can take him to the hotel. Let him wait for me there. I shall give him a letter in any case to deliver in Damascus. He had better travel with me in the car tomorrow morning. Take him to the hotel, and wait for me there, you," he added in Arabic to Suliman.

Yussuf came and opened the door. Suliman took my hand and led me out. The door slammed shut behind me, and a great Sikh, leaning on his rifle at a corner thirty feet away, came to life just sufficiently to follow me up-street with curious brown eyes.

"That is Narayan Singh," announced Suliman when we had passed him. "He is Jimgrim's friend."

There was another Sikh just in sight of him at the next corner, and another beyond him again, all looking rather bored but awfully capable. None except the first one took the slightest notice of us.

It was some consolation to know that "Jimgrim's friend" was on guard outside Yussuf's. I had no means of knowing what weapons Grim carried, if any, but was positive of one thing: if either Noureddin Ali or the man with alligator eyes should get an inkling of his real identity his life would not be worth ten minutes' purchase. Including Yussuf, who would likely do as he was told, there would be three to one between those silent walls, and it seemed to me that Narayan Singh might as well be three miles away as thirty feet. However, there was nothing I could do about it.

It was late afternoon already, and the crowd was swarming all one way, the women carrying the baskets and the men lording it near enough to keep an eye on them. If Suliman and I were followed, whoever had that job had his work cut out, for we were swallowed up in a noisy stream of home-going villagers, whose baskets and other burdens made an effectual screen behind as well as in front.

The hotel stands close by the Jaffa Gate, and there the crowd was densest, for the outgoing swarm was met by another tide of

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city-folk returning. In the mouth of the hotel arcade stood an officer whom I knew well enough by sight—Colonel Good enough, commander of Sikhs, a quiet, gray little man with a monocle, and that air of knowing his own mind that is the real key to control of Indian troops. Up a side-street there were a dozen troop-horses standing, and a British subaltern was making himself as inconspicuous as he could in the doorway of a store. It did not need much discernment to judge that those in authority were ready to deal swiftly with any kind of trouble.

But the only glimpse I had of any mob-spirit stirring was when three obvious Zionist Jews were rather roughly hustled by some Hebron men, who pride themselves on their willingness to brawl with any one. Two Sikhs interfered at once, and Goodenough, who was watching, never batted an eyelash.

I WAS tired, wanted a whisky and soda and a bath more than anything else I could imagine at the moment, and eager to get to my room in the hotel. Suliman, being not much more than a baby after all, wanted to go to sleep. We went past Goodenough, who eyed me sharply but took no further notice, and entered the hotel door. But there we were met by Cerberus in the shape of an Arab porter, who cursed our religion and ordered us out again, threatening violence if we did not make haste.

Suliman argued with him in vain, and even whimpered. There was nothing for it but to return to the arcade, where I sat down on a step, from which a native policeman drove me away officiously. I had about made up my mind to go and speak to Goodenough in English, when Grim appeared.

Not even Goodenough recognized him, his Syrian stride was so well acted. He saluted, and the salute was returned punctiliously but with that reserve toward a foreigner that the Englishman puts on unconsciously, and that he so often stumbles over clumsily when he tries to overcome it. When Grim spoke to him in Arabic Goodenough answered in the same language. I did not hear what was said at first, but as I drew closer I heard the sequel, for Grim changed suddenly to English.

"If you can't spot me through that magnifying-glass of yours, colonel, I guess this leopard has changed his spots all right. I'm Grim. Don't change your expression. Quick: look around and tell me if I'm followed."

"Hard to say. Such a crowd here. There's a Syrian over the way with a bulbous nose, who came along after you; he's leaning with his back to the wall now, watching us."

"He's the boy."

"I see Narayan Singh has left his post. Did you give him orders?"

"Yes. Told him to follow any one who followed me. I don't want that fellow interfered with. He may stay there, or more likely he'll call others to take his place. they'll watch all night, if they're allowed to: Let them. Wish you'd give orders they're to be let alone. Then, please let Narayan Singh go off duty and get some sleep; I'm going to want him all day tomorrow."

"All right, Grim; anything else?"

"First opportunity, I wish you'd come to Davey's room upstairs. Now—long distance stuff again, sir—if any Syrian asks you about me, you might say I was making sure the car would come for me at dawn."

They exchanged salutes again as one suspicious alien to another. Grim looked suitably surprized at sight of me, and led me and Suliman back to the hotel, where Suliman wanted him to wreak dire vengeance on the porter; he grew sulky when he discovered that his influence with Grim was not sufficient for the purpose, but forgot it, small boy fashion, ten minutes later, when he fell asleep on the floor in a corner of Davey's room.

Davey did not look exactly pleased to see us, although he seemed to like Grim personally, and was the first that day to see through Grim's disguise at the first glance. Mrs. Davey, on the other hand, was radiant with smiles—thrilled at the prospect of learning secrets; she produced drinks and pushed the armchairs up; when she learned who I was her husband could hardly keep her from putting on a costume too, to make a party of it.

DAVEY was reserved. He asked no questions. A gray-headed, gray-eyed, stocky, sturdy-looking man, who had made impossibilities come true on three continents, he waited for trouble to come to him instead of seeking it. There was silence for several minutes over the

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cigars and whisky before Grim opened fire at last. He talked straight out in front of Mrs. Davey, for she had mothered Standard Oil men in a hundred out-of-the-way places, and knew more sacred secrets than the Sphinx.

"Any news about your oil concessions, Davey?"

"No. Not a word. We've got every prospect in the country marked out. Nothing to do now but wait for the mandate, while the Zionists go behind our backs to the Foreign Office and scheme for the concessions. It's my belief these English mean to favor the Zionists and put us in the ditch. The fact that we were first on the ground, and lodged our applications with the Turks before the war seems to make no difference in their lives."

"Well, old man, I've arranged for you to change your policy."

"What in thunder do you mean?"

Mrs. Davey giggled with delight, but her husband frowned ominously.

"I'm supposed to be Staff-Captain Ali Mirza of the Shereefian army."

"I've heard of him. He's a bad one, Jim."

"I was in a place just now with a bunch of murderers, who'd have made short work of me if I couldn't give them a sound reason for being in Jerusalem just now."

"Why didn't you have 'em all 'rested, then?"

"For the same reason, Davey, that Standard Oil isn't piping ten thousand barrels a day from Jericho. The time is not yet. Things haven't reached that stage. I told them Standard Oil gave up hope long ago of getting a concession from the British, and has decided to finance Mustapha Kemal."

Davey flung his cigar out of the window, and laid both hands on his knees. His face was a picture of baffled indignation; but his wife laughed.

"They were tickled to death. I'm supposed to be going to Damascus tomorrow morning with a hundred thousand dollars in U. S. gold, obtained from you in ten small bags. We've got to find some bags and pack them full of something heavy."

"I'll have nothing to do with it!" Davey exploded at last. "It's a —— outrage! Why—this tale will be all over the place. The Jews will get hold of it, and make complaints in London. Next you know, our State Department will be raising blue ——; questions asked in Congress—headlines in the papers! What do you suppose our people will think of me?"

"Refer them to your wife, Davey. She's got you out of much worse messes."

"I'll drive the car straight up to OETA* and lodge my protest against this in less than fifteen minutes!"

"No need, Davey, old man. Goodenough will be in here presently. Kick to him."

Mrs. Davey went into the next room and returned with a roll of coarse cotton cloth.

"I've no bags, Jim, but if this stuff will do I can sew some right now."

"Good enough, Emily, go to it."

"D'you want to lose me my job?" demanded Davey, but his wife took up the scissors and smiled back at him.

"You know better than that. We've trusted Jim before."

"Listen, Davey; this thing's serious," said Grim.

"I know it is! So'm I! Nothing doing!"

"You're on the inside of an official secret."

"—— official secrets! My business is oil!"

"There'll be no oil in this man's land for any one for fifty years if you won't play. There'll be a *jihad* instead. They're planning to blow up the Dome of the Rock."

"Jee-rusalem!"

"Straight goods, Davey. Two tons of TNT stolen, and our old friend Scharnhoff, the Austrian, hunting for the Tomb of the Kings—digging for it day and night—conspirators waiting to run in the explosive as soon as the tunnel is complete."

"Why not 'rest 'em at once?"

"We want the lot of them, explosive and all—don't know where the explosive is yet. Bag the lot, and kill the story. Otherwise—d'you see what it means, if the news leaks out? They'll blame the attempt on the Jews, and the minute the British protect the Jews there'll be all Moslem Asia on fire. Get me?"

"Get you? Yes, I get you. I'll get —— from the home office, though, for meddling in politics."

Goodenough came in then, rather a different man from the stern little martinet who had stood in the throat of the arcade. He was all smiles.

"Evening, Mrs. Davey," he said genially. "That one man went away, Grim, and three

*Headquarters: Occupied Enemy Territory Administration.

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took his place. They shan't be disturbed. Narayan Singh has gone off duty. Now, Mrs. Davey, I was told Americans had sworn off cocktails. D'you mean to say you'd tempt a thirsty soldier?"

CHAPTER VI

"The enemy is nearly always useful if you leave him free to make mistakes."

THE next item on the program was to wake up Suliman, who did not want to wake at all. He had lost all interest in secret service for the time being, and even Mrs. Davey's New York candy did not stir much enthusiasm.

"All right then," Grim announced at last. "School for you, and I'll get another side-partner."

That settled it. The boy could contemplate existence that should include sharing a packing case with Julius Caesar, and school, where there would be other iniquitous small boys to be led into trouble, had no particular terrors; but to permit another boy, perhaps a Jew or a Christian, to own Jimgrim was outside the pale of inflictions that pride could tolerate.

"I am awake!" he retorted, rubbing his eyes to prove it.

"Come here, then. D'you know where to find your mother?"

"At the place where I went yesterday."

"Take her some of Mrs. Davey's candy. Don't eat it on the way, mind! Get inside the place if you can, but if she won't let you in try how much you can see through the door. Ask no questions. If she asks what you've been doing, tell her the truth and say you cleaned my boots. Then come back here and tell me all you've seen."

"Sending him to spy on his own mother, Jim?" asked Mrs. Davey as Suliman left the room with candy in both fists. She paused from stitching at the cotton bags to look straight at him.

"His mother is ole man Scharnhoff's housekeeper," Grim answered. "Scharnhoff wouldn't stand for the boy, and drove him out. The mother liked Scharnhoff's flesh-pots better than the prospects of the streets, so she stayed on, swiping stuff from Scharnhoff's larder now and then to slip to the kid through the back-door. But he was starving all right when I found him."

Mrs. Davey laid her sewing down.

"D'you mean to tell me that old butter-wouldn't-melt-in-his-mouth professor is that child's father?"

"No. The father was a Turkish soldier—went with the retreat. If he's alive he's probably with Mustapha Kemal in Anatolia. Old Scharnhoff used to keep a regular harem under the Turks. He got rid of them to save his face when our lot took Jerusalem, and puts up with one now; but he has the thorough-going Turk's idea of married life."

"And to think I had him here to tea—twice—no, three times! I liked him, too! Found him interesting."

"He is," said Grim.

"Very!" agreed Goodenough.

"If it weren't for that harem habit of his," said Grim, "some acquaintances of his would have blown up the Dome of the Rock about this time tomorrow. As it is, they won't get away with it. Suliman came and told me one day that his mother was carrying food to Scharnhoff to a little house in a street that runs below the Haram-es-Sheriff. I looked into that. Then came news that two tons of TNT was missing, on top of a request from Scharnhoff for permission to go about at night unquestioned. After that it was only a question of putting two and two together——"

"Plus Narayan Singh," said Goodenough. "I still don't see, Grim, how you arrived at the conclusion that Scharnhoff is not guilty of the main intention. What's to prove he isn't in the pay of Mustapha Kemal?"

"I'LL explain. All Scharnhoff cares about is some manuscripts he thinks he'll find. He thinks he knows where they are. I expect he tried pretty hard to get the Turks to let him excavate for them, but the Turks knew better than offend religious prejudices. Then we come along, and stop all excavation—cancel all permits—refuse to grant new ones.

"Scharnhoff's problem is to dig without calling attention to what he's doing, and as an enemy alien he can't acquire property, or even rent property without permission. With the aid of Suliman's mother he makes the acquaintance of our friend Noureddin Ali, who has a friend, who in turn has a brother, who owns a little house in that street below the Haram-es-Sheriff."

"Strange coincidence!" said Goodenough. "It'll need a better argument than that to save his neck."

"Pardon me, sir. No coincidence at all.

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Remember, Scharnhoff has lived in Jerusalem for fifteen years. He seems to have satisfied himself that the Tomb of the Kings is directly under the Dome of the Rock. How is he to get to it? The Dome of the Rock stands in the middle of that great courtyard, with the buildings of the Haram-es-Sheriff surrounding it on every side, and hardly a stone in the foundations weighing less than ten tons.

"He reasons it out that there must be a tunnel somewhere, leading to the tomb, if it really is under the Dome of the Rock, and he goes to work while the Turks are still here to find the mouth of it. Remember, he's an archeologist. There's very little he doesn't know about Jerusalem. He knows who the owner is of every bit of property surrounding the Haram-es-Sheriff; he's made it his business to find out. So when he finally decides that this little stone house stands over the mouth of the tunnel, all that remains to do is to get access to it. He can't do that himself because of the regulations. He has to approach the Arab owner secretly and indirectly. That's where Suliman's mother comes in handy.

"She links him up with Noureddin Ali. There's a confab. Noureddin Ali, who's a red-minded devil, sees another aspect to the thing. He sees at once that if that tunnel can be found and opened up there can be an atrocity perpetrated that will simply produce anarchy all through the East."

"As bad as all that?" asked Mrs. Davey.

"That's no exaggeration," Goodenough answered. "I've lived twenty-five years in India, commanding Sikh and Moslem troops. The Sikhs are not interested in the Moslem religion in any way, but they'd make common cause with Moslems if that place were blown up and the blame could be attached to Jews. It's the second most sacred place in Asia. Even the Hindus would be stirred to their depths by it; they'd feel that their own sacred places were insecure, and that whoever destroyed them would be protected afterward by us."

"Gosh! Who'd be an Englishman!" laughed Davey.

"I don't see that it's proved yet that the idea of an explosion wasn't Scharnhoff's in the first place," Goodenough objected.

"For one thing, he wouldn't want to destroy antiquities," said Grim. "They're his obsession. He worships ancient history and all its monuments. No, Noureddin Ali thought of the explosion, and tipped off some one down at Ludd to watch for a chance to steal some TNT. He had better luck than he expected, and got two tons of it. If Scharnhoff knows anything at all about Noureddin Ali's real plans, then Noureddin Ali is blackmailing him, that's all—threatening to expose him if he doesn't go ahead."

"Scharnhoff will hang!" said Goodenough.

"I think not, sir. He'll prove as meek as an old sheep when we land on him."

"There, will the bags do?" asked Mrs. Davey.

"What are they for?" Goodenough asked.

"We're supposed to have a slush fund in this room of a hundred thousand dollars," Davey answered dourly. "Standard Oil is supposed to be buying Mustapha Kemal. I see my finish, if news of this ever reaches the States—or unless my version of it gets there first!"

Grim turned to me.

"We've got to find two people to take your place and mine in the car tomorrow morning. Perhaps you'd better go in any case; you'll enjoy the ride as far as Haifa—stay there a day or two, and come back when you feel like it. We'll find some officer to masquerade as me."

But there I rebelled—flat, downright mutiny.

"If I haven't made good so far," I said, "I'll consider myself fired, and hold my tongue. Otherwise, I see this thing through! Send some one else on the joy-ride."

"Good for you!" said Davey.

"——, man!" said Goodenough, staring at me through his monocle. "The rest of us get paid for taking chances. The only tangible reward you can possibly get will be a knife in your back. Better be sensible and take the ride to Haifa."

"My bet is down," said I.

"Good enough," Grim nodded. "It goes. All the same, you get a joy-ride. Can't take too many chances. Tell you about that later. Meanwhile, will you detail an officer to come and spend the night in this hotel and masquerade as me at dawn, sir? He can wear this uniform that I've got on—somebody about my height."

"Turner will do for that. What are you going to put in the bags?" asked Goodenough.

"Cartridges. They're heavy. You might tell Turner over the phone to bring them with him."

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AT THAT point Suliman returned, sooner than expected, with news that made Grim whistle. He had not been inside the place where his mother was, for she would not let him, but he had seen around her skirts as she stood in the partly opened door.

"There was a hole in the floor, and a great stone laid beside it.. Also much gray dust. And I think there was a light a long way down in the hole."

But that was not what made Grim whistle.

"What else? Did your mother say anything?"

"She was ill-tempered."

"Why?"

"That Scharnhoff had beaten her."

"I knew he'd make a bad break sooner or later. What did he beat her for?"

"Because she was afraid."

"That's a fine reason. Afraid of what?"

"He says she is to sell oranges. Four wooden benches have been brought, and tomorrow they are to be set outside the door in the street. Oranges and raisins have been bought, and she is to sit outside the door and sell them. She is afraid."

"Fruit bought already? Can't be. Was it inside there?"

"No. It is to come tomorrow. She says she does not know how to sell fruit, and is afraid of the police."

Grim and Goodenough exchanged glances.

"She says that if the police come everybody will be killed, and that I am to keep watch in the street in the morning and give warning of the police."

"That should teach you, young man, never to take a woman into your confidence —eh, Mrs. Davey?" said Goodenough.

"We're certainly the slow-witted set," she answered, piling the finished bags one on top of the other on the table.

Grim took me after that to the hotel roof, whence you can see the whole of Jerusalem. It was just before moonrise, so the ancient city lay in shadow, with only the Dome of the Rock looming above it, mysterious and silent. Down below us in the street, where a gasoline light threw a greenish-white glare, three Arabs in native costume were squatting with their backs against the low wall facing the hotel.

"Noureddin Ali's men," said Grim, chuckling. "They'll help us prove our alibi. The enemy is nearly always useful if you leave him free to make mistakes. You may have to spend the whole night in the mosque—you and Suliman. I'll take you there presently. Two of those men are pretty sure to follow us. One will probably follow me back here again. The other will stay to keep an eye on you. About an hour before dawn, in case nothing happens before that, you and Suliman come back here to the hotel. The car shall be here half-an-hour before daylight. You and Turner pile into it, and those three men watch you drive away. They'll hurry off to tell Noureddin Ali that Staff-Captain Ali Mirza and the deaf-and-dumb man have really started for Damascus, bags of gold and all.

"Turner must remember to drop a couple of bags and pick them up again, to call attention to them. There'll be a change of clothes in the car for you; when you've gone a mile or so, get into the other clothes and walk back. If I don't meet you by the Jaffa Gate, Suliman will, or else Narayan Singh. Things are liable to happen pretty fast tomorrow morning. Let's go.

"I'm supposed to have found out somehow that you're awful religious and want to pray, so it's the Dome of the Rock for yours. Any Moslem who wants to may sleep there, you know; but any Christian caught kidding them he's a Moslem would be for it—short shrift. He'd be dead before the sheikh of the place could hand him over to the authorities. If the TNT were really in place underneath you, which I'm pretty sure it won't be for a few hours yet, that would be lots safer than the other chance you're taking. So peel your wits. Let Suliman sleep if he wants to, but you'll have to keep awake all night."

"But what am I to do in there? What's likely to happen?"

"Just listen. The tunnel isn't through to the end yet, I'm sure of it. If it were, they'd have taken in the TNT, for it must be ticklish work keeping it hidden elsewhere, with scores of Sikhs watching day and night. But they're very near the end of the tunnel, or they wouldn't be opening up that fruit-shop. You'll hear them break through. When you're absolutely sure of that, come out of the mosque and say *'Atcha'*—just that one word—to the Sikh sentry you'll see standing under the archway through which we'll enter the courtyard presently. That sentry will be Narayan Singh, and he'll know what to do."

"What shall I do after that?"

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"Suit yourself. Either return to the mosque and go to sleep, if you can trust yourself to wake in time, or come and sit on the hotel step until morning. Have you got it all clear? It's a piece of good luck having you to do all this, for no real Moslem would ever be able to hold his tongue about it. They're superstitious about the Dome of the Rock. But ask questions now, if you're not clear; you mustn't be seen speaking in the street or in the mosque, remember. All plain sailing? Come along, then. If you're alive tomorrow you'll have had an adventure."

CHAPTER VII

"Poor old Scharnhoff's in the soup."

WE ATE a scratch dinner with the Daveys in their room and started forth. Grim had his nerve with him. He led me and Suliman straight up to the three spies who were squatting against the wall, and asked whether there were any special regulations that would prevent my being left for the night in the famous mosque. On top of that he asked one of the men to show him the shortest way. So two of them elected to come with us, walking just ahead, and the third man stayed where he was, presumably in case Noureddin Ali should send to make inquiries.

You must walk through Jerusalem by night, with the moon just rising, if you want really to get the glamour of eastern tales and understand how true to life those stories are of old Haroun-al-Raschid. It is the only city left with its ancient walls all standing, with its ancient streets intact, and with nothing whatever new to mar the setting.

Parts of the narrow thoroughfares are roofed over with vaulted arches. The domed roofs rise in unplanned, beautiful disorder against a sky luminous with jewels. To right and left you can look through keyhole arches down shadowy, narrow ways to carved doors through which Knights Templar used to swagger with gold spurs, and that Saladin's men appropriated after them.

Yellow lamplight, shining from small windows set deep in the massive walls casts an occasional band of pure gold across the storied gloom, and now and then a man steps out from a doorway, his identity concealed by flowing eastern finery, pauses for a moment in the light to look about him, and disappears into silent mystery.

Half-open doors at intervals give glimpses of white interiors, and of men from a hundred deserts sitting on mats to smoke great water-pipes and talk intrigue. There are smells that are stagnant with the rot of time; but other smells pungent with spice, and mystery, and the alluring scent of bales of merchandise that, like the mew of gulls, can set the mind traveling to lands unseen.

Through other arched doors, even at night, there is a glimpse of blindfold camels going round and round in ancient gloom at the oil-press. There are no sounds of revelry, for the Arab takes his pleasures stately fashion, and the Jew has learned from history that the safest way to enjoy life is to keep quiet about it. Now and then you can hear an Arab singing a desert song, not very musical but utterly descriptive of the life he leads; and once we caught the sound of a flute played wistfully in an upper room by some Jew returned from the West to take up anew the thread of ancient history.

Grim nudged me sharply in one shadowy place, where the street went down in twenty-foot-long steps between the high walls of windowless harems. Another narrow street crossed ours thirty feet ahead of us, and our two guides were hurrying, only glancing back at intervals to make sure we had not given them the slip. The cross-street was between us and them, and as Grim nudged me two men—a bulky, bearded big one and one of rather less than middle height, both in Arab dress—passed in front of us. There was no chance of being overheard, and Grim spoke in a low voice:

"Do you recognize them?"

I shook my head.

"Scharnhoff and Noureddin Ali!"

I don't see now how he recognized them so instantly; but I suppose a man who works long enough at Grim's business acquires a sixth sense. They were walking swiftly, and arguing in low tones, much too busy with their own affairs to pay attention to us. Our two guides glanced back a moment later, but they had vanished by then into the gloom of the cross-street.

There was a dim lamp at one corner of that crossing. As we passed through its pale circle of light I noticed a man who looked like an Arab lurking in the shadow

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just beyond it, and I thought he made a sign to Grim, but did not see Grim return it.

Grim watched his chance and spoke again.

"That man in the shadow is a Sikh—Narayan Singh's side-kick—keeping tabs on Scharnhoff. I'll bet old Scharnhoff has got cold feet and went to find Noureddin Ali to try and talk him out of it. Might as well try to pretty-pussy a bob-cat away from a hen-yard! Poor old Scharnhoff's in the soup!"

QUITE suddenly after that we reached a fairly wide street and nothing beyond us but the arched Byzantine gateway of the Haram-es-Sheriff, through which we could see tall cypress trees against the moonlit sky and the dome of the mosque beyond them. They do say the Taj Mahal at Agra is a lovelier sight, and more inspiring; but perhaps that is because the Taj is farther away from the folk who like to have opinions at second-hand. Age, history, situation, setting, sanctity—the Dome of the Rock has the advantage of all those, and the purple sky, crowded with colored stars beyond it is more wonderful over Jerusalem, because of the clearness of the mountain air.

In that minute, and for the first time, I hated the men who could plot to blow up that place. Hitherto I had been merely interested.

Because it was long after the hour when non-Moslem visitors are allowed to go about the place with guides, we were submitted to rather careful scrutiny by men who came out of the shadows and said nothing, but peered into our faces. They did not speak to let us by, but signified admittance by turning uninterested backs and retiring to some dark corner to resume the vigil. I thought that the Sikh sentry, who stood with bayonet fixed outside the arch, looked at Grim with something more than curiosity, but no sign that I could detect passed between them.

The great white moonlit courtyard was empty. Not a soul stirred in it or a shadow moved. Because of the hour there were not even any guides lurking around the mosque, and the only shape that came to life as we approached the main entrance of the mosque was the man who takes care of slippers for a small fee.

Grim, since he was in military dress, allowed the attendant to tie on over his shoes the great straw slippers they keep there for the purpose. Suliman had nothing on his feet; I kicked off the red Damascus slippers I was wearing, and we entered the octagonal building by passing under a curtain at the rear of the deep, vaulted entrance.

Nobody took any notice of us at first. It was difficult to see, for one thing, for the light of the lamps that hung on chains from the arches overhead was dimmed by colored lenses and did little more than beautify the gloom. But in the dimness in the midst you could see the rock of Abraham, surrounded by a railing to preserve it from profane feet; and little by little the shadows took shape of men praying, or sleeping, or conversing in low tones.

The place was not crowded; there were perhaps a hundred men in there, some of whom doubtless intended to spend the night, and all of whom, though they gave us a cursory glance, seemed inclined to mind their own business. It looked for a minute as if we were going to remain in there unquestioned, but the two spies who had come with us saw a chance to confirm or else disprove our *bona fides*, and while one of them stayed and watched us the other went to fetch the Sheikh of the Mosque.

He came presently, waddling very actively for such a stout man—a big, burly, gray-bearded veteran, with eyes that beamed intelligent good-humor through heavy folds of fat. He did not seem at all pleased to have been disturbed, until he drew near enough to scan our faces, and then his change of expression as soon as he had looked once into Grim's eyes gave me cold chills all down the back. I could have sworn he was going to denounce us.

But instead, he turned on the two spies and tongue-lashed them in Arabic. I could not follow it word for word, but gathered that they had hinted some suspicion as to the genuineness of Grim's pretension to be Staff-captain Ali Mirza, and he was rebuking them for it. They slunk away; one went and sat near the door we had entered by, and the other vanished completely.

"Jimgrim! What do you do here at this hour?" asked the sheikh as soon as we stood alone.

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"TALK French," Grim answered. "We can't afford to be overheard."

"True, O Jimgrim! It is all your life and my position is worth for you to be detected in here in that disguise at such an hour! And who are these with you?"

"It is all your life and mosque are worth to turn us out!" Grim answered. "When was I ever your enemy?"

"Never yet, but—what does this mean?"

"You shall know in the morning—you alone. This man, who can neither hear nor speak, and the child with him must stay in here tonight, and go when they choose unquestioned."

"Jimgrim, this is not a place for setting traps for criminals. Set your watch outside, and none shall interfere with you."

" 'Shall the heart within be cleansed by washing hands?' " Grim quoted, and the sheikh smiled.

"Do you mean there are criminals within the place? Then this is their sanctuary; they shall not be disturbed. Set watchmen at the doors and catch them as they leave, if you will. This is holy ground."

"There'll be none of it left to boast about this time tomorrow, if you choose to insist!" said Grim.

"Should there be riddles between you and me?" asked the sheikh.

"You shall know all in the morning."

The sheikh's face changed again, taking on a look of mingled rage and cunning.

"I know, then, what it is! The rumor is true that those cursed Zionists intend to desecrate the place. This fellow, who you say is deaf and dumb, is one of your spies—is he not? Perhaps he can smell a Zionist—eh? Well, there are others! Better tell me the truth, Jimgrim, and in fifteen minutes I will pack this place so full of true Moslems that no conspirator could worm his way in! Then if the Jews start anything let them beware!"

"By the beard of your Prophet," Grim answered impiously, "this has nothing to do with Zionists."

"Neither have I, then, anything to do with this trespass. You have my leave to depart at once, Jimgrim!"

"After the ruin——"

"There will be no ruin, Jimgrim! I will fill the place with men."

"Better empty it of men! The more there are in it the bigger the death-roll! Shall I say afterward that I begged leave to set a watch, and you refused?"

"You—you, Jimgrim—you talk to me of ruin and a death-roll? You are no every-day alarmist."

"Did you ever catch me in a lie?"

"No, Jimgrim; you are too clever by far for that! If you were to concoct a lie it would take ten angels to unravel it! But—you speak of ruin and a death-roll, eh?" He stroked his beard for about a minute. "You have heard, perhaps, that Moslems are sharpening their swords for a reckoning with the Jews? There may be some truth in it, but there shall be no gathering in this place for any such purpose, for I will see to that. You need set no watch in here on that account."

"The time always comes," Grim answered, "when you must trust a man or mistrust him. You've known me eleven years. Which are you going to do?"

"In the name of God, what shall I answer! *Taib*,* Jimgrim, I will trust you. What is it you wish?"

"To leave this deaf-and-dumb man and the boy below the rock, undisturbed."

"That can not well be. Occasionally others go to pray in that place. Also, there is a Moslem who has made the pilgrimage from Trichinopoli. I myself have promised to show him the mosque tonight, because he leaves Jerusalem at dawn, and only I speak a language he can understand. There will be others with him, and I can not refuse to take them down below the rock."

"That is nothing," Grim answered. "They will think nothing of a deaf-and-dumb man praying or sleeping in a corner."

"Is that all he wishes to do? He will remain still in one place? Then come."

"One other thing. That fellow who went and fetched you—he sits over there by the north door now—will ask you questions about me presently. Tell him I'm leaving for Damascus in the morning. If he asks what we have been speaking about so long, tell him I brought you the compliments of Mustapha Kemal."

"I will tell him to go to *jahannam!* "

"Better be civil to him. His hour comes tomorrow."

*All right.

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THE sheikh led the way along one side of the inner of three concentric parts into which the mosque is divided by rows of marble columns, until we came to a cavernous opening in the floor, where steps hewn in the naked rock led downward into a cave that underlies the spot on which tradition says Abraham made ready to sacrifice his son.

It was very dark below, for only one little oil lamp was buring on a rock shaped like an altar in one corner, casting leaping shadows that looked like ghosts on the smooth, uneven walls. The whole place was hardly more than twenty feet wide each way, and there was no furniture, not even the usual mats—nothing but naked rock to lie or sit on, polished smooth as glass by centuries of naked feet.

I was going to sit in a corner, but Grim seized my arm and pointed to the center of the floor, stamping with his foot to show the exact place I should take. It rang vaguely hollow under the impact, and Suliman, already frightened by the shadows, seized my hand in a paroxysm of terror.

"You've got to prove you're a man tonight and stick it out!" Grim said to him in English; and with that, rather than argue the point and risk a scene he followed the sheikh up the steps and disappeared. Grim's methods with Suliman were a strange mixture of understanding sympathy and downright indifference to sentiment that got him severely criticized by the know-it-all party, who always, everywhere condemn. But he certainly got results.

A legion of biblical devils owned Suliman and, when he dared, he spat at the name of Christianity; but he was loyal to Grim with a courage and persistence past belief, and Grim knew how to worm the truth out of him and make him keep his word, which is more than some of the professional reformers know how to do with their protégés. I believe that Suliman would rather have earned Grim's curt praise than all the fabulous delights of even a Moslem paradise.

But the kid was in torment. His idea of manliness precluded any exhibition of fear in front of me, if he could possibly keep himself from it. He would not have minded breaking down in front of Grim, for he knew that Grim knew him inside out; on the contrary, he looked down on me, as a mere amateur at the game, who had never starved at the Jaffa Gate, or eaten candle-ends, or gambled for milliemes* with cab-drivers' sons while picking up odds and ends of gossip for a government that hardly knew of his existence. In front of me he proposed to act the man—guide—showman—mentor. He considered himself my boss.

But it was stern work. If there had been a little noise to make the shadows less ghostly; if Suliman had not been full of half-digested superstition; or if he had not overheard enough to be aware that a prodigious, secret plot was in some way connected with that cavern, he could have kept his courage up by swaggering in front of me.

He nearly fell asleep, with his head in my lap, at the end of half an hour, but when there was a sound at last he almost screamed, and I had to clap my hand over his mouth; whereat he promptly bit my finger, resentful because he knew then that I knew he was afraid.

It proved to be approaching footsteps—the sheikh of the mosque again, leading the man from Trichinopoli and a party of three friends. Their rear was brought up by Noureddin Ali's spy, anxious about me, but pretending to want to overhear the sheikh's account of things.

HE REELED it all off in a cultured voice accustomed to using the exact amount of energy required, but even so his words boomed in the cavern like the forethought of thunder. You couldn't help wondering whether a man of his intelligence believed quite all he said, however much impressed the man from Trichinopoli might be.

"We are now beneath the very rock on which Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. This rock is the center of the world. Jacob anointed it. King Solomon built his temple over it. The Prophet of God, the Prince Mohammed, on whose head be blessings! said of this place that it is next in order of holiness after Mecca, and that one prayer said here is worth ten elsewhere. Here, in this place, is where King Solomon used to kneel in prayer, and where God appeared to him. This corner is where David prayed. Here prayed Mohammed.

"Look up; this hollow in the roof is over the spot where the prophet Mohammed slept. When he arose there was not room for him to stand upright, so the rock receded, and the hollow place remains to this

*The smallest coin of the country.

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day in proof of it. Beneath us is the Bir-el-Arwah, the well of souls, where those who have died come to pray twice weekly. Listen!"

He stamped three times with his foot on the spot about two feet in front of where I sat, and a faint, hollow boom answered the impact.

"You hear? The rock speaks! It spoke in plain words when the Prophet prayed here, and was translated instantly to heaven on his horse El-Burak. Here, deep in the rock, is the print of the hand of the angel, who restrained the rock from following him. Here, in this niche, is where Abraham used to pray; here, Elijah. On the last day the Kaaba of Mecca must come to this place, for it is here, in this cave, that the blast of the trumpet will sound, announcing the day of judgment. Then God's throne will be planted on the rock above us. Be humble in the presence of these marvels."

He turned on his pompous heel and led the way out again without as much as a sidewise glance at me. The spy was satisfied; he followed the party up the rock-hewn steps, and as a matter of fact went to sleep on a mat near the north door, for so I found him later on.

The silence shut down again, and Suliman went fast asleep, snoring with the even cadence of a clock's tick, using my knees for a pillow with a perfect sense of ownership. He was there to keep care of me, not I of him. The sleep suggestion very soon took hold of me, too, for there was nothing whatever to do but sit and watch the shadows move, trying to liken them to something real as they changed shape in answer to the flickering of the tiny, naked flame. Thereafter, the vigil resolved itself into a battle with sleep, and an effort to keep my wits sufficiently alert for sudden use.

I had no watch, and there was nothing to give the least notion of how much time had passed. I even counted the boy's snores for a while, and watched one lonely louse moving along the wall—so many snores to a minute—so many snores to an inch of crawling; but the louse changed what little mind he had and did not walk straight, and I gave up trying to calculate the distance he traveled in zigzags and curves, although it would have made an interesting problem for a navigator. Finally, Suliman's snoring grew so loud that that in itself kept me awake; it was like listening to a hair-trombone; each blast of it rasped your nerves.

You could not hear anything in the mosque above, although there were only eleven steps and the opening was close at hand; for the floor was thickly carpeted, and if there were any sounds they were swallowed by that and the great, domed roof. When I guessed it might be midnight I listened for the voice of the muezzin; but if he did call the more-than-usually faithful to wake up and pray, he did it from a minaret outside, and no faint echo of his voice reached me. I was closed in a tomb in the womb of living rock, to all intents and purposes.

But it must have been somewhere about midnight when I heard a sound that set every vein in my body to tingling. At first it was like the sort of sound that a rat makes gnawing; but there couldn't be rats eating their way through that solid stone. I thought I heard it a second time, but Suliman's snoring made it impossible to listen properly. I shook him violently, and he sat up.

"Keep still! Listen!"

Between sleeping and waking the boy forgot all about the iron self-control he practised for Grim's exacting sake.

"What is it? I am afraid!"

"Be still, confound you! Listen!"

"How close beneath us are the souls of the dead? Oh, I am afraid!"

"Silence! Breathe through your mouth. Make no noise at all!"

HE TOOK my hand and tried to sit absolutely still; but the gnawing noise began again, more distinctly, followed by two or three dull thuds from somewhere underneath us.

"Oh, it is the souls of dead men! Oh——"

"Shut up, you little idiot! All right, I'll tell Jimgrim!"

Fear and that threat combined were altogether too much for him. One sprig of seedling manhood remained to him, and only one—the will to smother emotion that he could not control a second longer. He buried his head in my lap, stuffing his mouth with the end of the *abiyi* to choke the sobs back. I covered his head completely and, like the fabled ostrich, in that darkness he felt better.

Suddenly, as clear as the ring of glass

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against thick glass in the distance, something gave way and fell beneath us. Then again. Then there were several thuds, followed by a rumble that was unmistakable —falling masonry; it was the noise that bricks make when they dump them from a tip-cart, only smothered by the thickness of the cavern floor. I shook Suliman again.

"Come on. We're going. Now, let me have a good account of you to give to Jimgrim. Shut your teeth tight, and remember the part you've got to play."

He scrambled up the steps ahead of me, and I had to keep hold of the skirts of his smock to prevent him from running. But he took my hand at the top, and we managed to get out through the north door without exciting comment, and without waking the spy, although I would just as soon have wakened him, for Grim seemed to think it important that his alibi and mine should be well established; however, there were two others watching by the hotel. Ten minutes later I was glad I had not disturbed him.

I gave Suliman a two-piastre piece to pay the man who had charge of my slippers at the door, and the young rascal was so far recovered from his fright that he demanded change out of it, and stood there arguing until he got it. Then, hand-in-hand, we crossed the great moonlit open court to the gate by which Grim had brought us in.

Looking back, so bright was the moon that you could even see the blue of the tiles that cover the mosque wall, and the interwoven scroll of writing from the Koran that runs around like a frieze below the dome. But it did not look real. It was like a dream-picture—perhaps the dream of the men who slept huddled under blankets in the porches by the gate. If so, they dreamed beautifully.

There was a Sikh, as Grim had said there would be, standing with fixed bayonet on the bottom step leading to the street. He stared hard at me, and brought his rifle to the challenge as I approached him—a six-foot, black-bearded stalwart he was, with a long row of campaign ribbons, and the true, truculent Sikh way of carrying his head. He looked strong enough to carry an ox away.

"*Atcha!*" said I, going close to him.

He did not answer a word, but shouldered his rifle and marched off. Before he had gone six paces he brought the rifle to the trail, and started running. Another Sikh —a younger man—stepped out of a shadow and took his place on the lower step. He was not quite so silent, and he knew at least one word of Arabic.

"*Imshi!*" he grunted; and that, in plain U. S. American, means "Beat it!"

I had no objection, and it sounded like rather good advice. Remembering what Grim had said about the danger I was running, and looking at the deep black shadows of the streets, it occurred to me that that spy, who slept so soundly by the mosque door, might wake up and be annoyed with himself. When men of that type get annoyed they generally like to work it off on somebody.

Rather than admit that he had let me get away from him he might prefer to track me through the streets and use his knife on me in some dark corner. After that he could claim credit with Noureddin Ali by swearing he had reason to suspect me of something or other. The suggestion did not seem any more unreal to me than the moonlit panorama of the Haram-es-Sheriff, or the Sikh who had stepped out of nowhere-at-all to "*imshi*" me away.

On the other hand, I had no fancy for the hotel steps. To sit and fall asleep there would be to place myself at the mercy of the other two spies, who might come and search me; and I was conscious of certain papers in an inner pocket, and of underclothes made in America, that might have given the game away.

Besides, I was no longer any too sure of Suliman. The boy was so sleepy that his wits were hardly in working order, and if those two spies by the hotel were to question him he might betray the two of us by some clumsy answer. If there was to be trouble that night I preferred to have it at the hands of Sikhs, who are seldom very drastic unless you show violence. I might be arrested if I walked the streets, but that would be sheer profit as compared to half a yard of cold knife in the broad of my back.

"Take me to the house where you talked with your mother," I said to Suliman.

So we turned to the left and set off together in that direction, watched with something more than mild suspicion by the Sikh, and, if Suliman's sensations were anything like mine, feeling about as cheerless, homeless and aware of impending evil as the dogs that slunk away into the night.

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I took advantage of the first deep shadow I could find to walk in, less minded to explore than to avoid pursuit.

CHAPTER VIII

"But we're ready for them."

WITHOUT in the least suspecting it I had gone straight into a blind trap, into which, it was true, I could not be followed by Noureddin Ali's spy, but out of which there was no escape without being recognized. The moment I stepped into the deep shadow I heard an unmistakable massed movement behind and, sure that I could not be seen, faced about. A platoon of Sikhs had appeared from nowhere, and were standing at ease already across the end of the street I had entered, with the moonlight silvering their bayonets.

Well, most streets have two ends, so I walked forward, not taking much trouble about concealment, since it was not easy to walk silently. If the Sikh can't see his enemy he likes to fire first and challenge afterwards. The sight of those uncompromising bayonets had changed my mind for me about the choice of evils, and the knife of a hardly probable assassin seemed a wiser risk than the ready triggers of the Punjab.

Half-way down the street Suliman tugged at my cloak.

"That is the place where my mother is," he said, pointing to a narrow door on the left.

But I was not exactly interested. The little stone house was all in darkness. There were no windows that I could see. No sound came from it. And farther down the street there was a lamp burning, whose light spelled safety from shots fired at the sound of footfall on suspicion. I wanted that light between me and the Sikh platoon, yet did not dare run for it, since that would surely have started trouble. It is my experience of Sikhs that when they start a thing they like to finish it, and enter into explanations afterward.

They must have seen us pass through the belt of gasoline light, but they did not challenge, so I went forward more slowly, with rather less of that creepy feeling that makes a man's spine seem to belong to some one else. Toward its lower end the street curved considerably, and we went about a quarter of a mile before the glare of another light began to appear around the bend.

That was at a cross-street, up which I proposed to turn more or less in the direction of the hotel. But I did nothing of the sort. There was a cordon of Sikhs drawn across there too, with no British officer in sight to enforce discretion.

Come to think of it, I have always regarded a bayonet wound in the stomach as the least desirable of life's unpleasantries.

So Suliman and I turned back. I decided to investigate that dark little stone house after all, for it occurred to me that, if that was the center of conspiracy, then Grim would certainly show up there sooner or later and straighten out the predicament. Have you ever noticed how hungry you get walking about aimlessly in the dark, especially when you are sleepy in the bargain? Suliman began to whimper for food, and although I called him a belly on legs by way of encouragement he had my secret sympathy.

The side of the street on which the little stone house stood was darkest, so we sat down with our backs against its wall, and the boy proceeded to fall asleep at once. The one thing I was sure I must not do was imitate him, so I began to look about me in the hope of finding something sufficiently interesting to keep me awake.

There was nothing in the street except the makings of a bad smell. I searched the opposite wall, on which the moon shone, but there was nothing there of even architectural interest. My eyes traveled higher, and rested at last on something extremely curious.

The wall was not very high at that point. It formed the blind rear of a house that faced into a court of some sort approached by an alley from another street. There were no windows and a small door some distance to my left belonged obviously to the next house. On top of the wall, almost exactly, but not quite, in the middle of it, was a figure that looked like a wooden carving—something like one of those fat, seated Chinamen they used to set over the tea counter of big grocer's shops.

But the one thing that you never see, and can be sure of not seeing in Jerusalem outside of a Christian church, is a carved human figure of any kind; for the Moslems are fanatical on that point, and whatever exterior statues the crusaders for instance left the Saracens and Turks destroyed. Besides, why was it not exactly in the middle?

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IT WAS much too big and thick-set to be a sleeping vulture. It was the wrong shape to be any sort of chimney. It was certainly not a bale of merchandise put up on the roof to dry. And the longer you looked at it the less it seemed to resemble anything recognizable. I had about reached the conclusion that it must be a bundle of sheepskins up-ended, ready to be spread out in the morning sun, and was going to cast about for something else to puzzle over, when it moved. The man who thinks he would not feel afraid when a thing like that moves in the dark unexpectedly has got to prove it before I believe him. The goose-flesh broke out all over me.

A moment later the thing tilted forward, and a man's head emerged from under a blanket. It chuckled damnably; if there had been a rock of the right size within reach I would have thrown it, for it is not agreeable to be chuckled at when you are hungry, sleepy, and in a trap. I know just how trapped animals feel.

But then it spoke in good plain English; and you could not mistake the voice.

"That's what comes of suiting yourself, isn't it! Place plugged at both ends, and nowhere to go but there and back! Thanks for tipping off Narayan Singh—you see, we were all ready. Here's a pass that'll let you out—catch!"

He threw down a piece of white paper, folded.

"Show that to the Sikhs at either end. Now beat it, while the going's good. Leave Suliman there, I shall want him when he's had his sleep out. Say: hadn't you better change your mind about coming back too soon from that joy ride? Haven't you had enough of this? The next move's plumb dangerous."

"Is it my choice?" I asked.

"I guess we owe you some consideration."

"Then I'm in on the last act."

"All right. Don't blame me afterward. Turner will give you instructions. Better get a move on now."

So I lowered Suliman's head gently from my knee on to a nice comfortable corner of the stone gutter, and went up-street to interview the Sikhs. It was rather like a New York customs inspection, after your cabin steward has not been heavily enough tipped, and has tipped off the men in blue by way of distributing the discontent. I showed them the safe-pass Grim had scribbled, and they accepted that as preliminary evidence of right to be alive, but no more. I was searched painstakingly and ignominiously for weapons, no questions asked and nothing taken for granted, even my small change being examined in the moonlight coin by coin, to make sure, I suppose, that it wouldn't explode if struck on stone. They gave everything back to me.

A bearded non-commissioned officer entered a description of me in a pocket memorandum book, and if his face as he wrote it was anything to judge by he described me as a leper without a license. Then I was cautioned gruffly in an unknown tongue and told to *"imshi!"* It isn't a bad plan to *"imshi"* rather quickly when a Sikh platoon offers the required encouragement; I left them standing all alone, with nothing but the empty night to bristle at.

The rest of that night, until half-an-hour before dawn was a half-waking dream of discomfort and chilly draughts in the mouth of the hotel arcade, where I sat and watched the spies and they watched me. The third man was presumably still sleeping in the mosque, but it was satisfactory to know that the other two were just as cold and unhappy as I felt.

About ten minutes before the car came the third man showed up sheepishly, looking surprized as well as relieved to find me sitting there, and put in several minutes explaining matters to his friends. I don't doubt he lied like a horse-trader and gave a detailed account of having followed me from place to place, for he used a great deal of pantomimic gesture, and the other two were cynical with the air of men who must sit and listen to another blowing his own trumpet.

THE car arrived with a fanfare of horn-blowing, the chauffeur evidently having had instructions to call lots of attention to himself. Turner came out at once, with the lower part of his face protected against the morning chill by a muffler; being about the same height, and in that Syrian uniform, he looked remarkably like Grim, except that he did not imitate the stride nearly as well.

He stumbled over me, clutched my shoulder and made signs for the benefit of the spies, and whispered to me to help him carry out the "money" bags. So we each took three for the first trip, and each contrived to

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drop one. By the time all ten bags were in the car there can hardly have remained any doubt in the conspirators' minds that we were really taking funds to Mustapha Kemal, or at any rate to somebody up north.

But Davey was no half-way concession maker; having lent himself unwillingly to the trick, he did his best to make the sacrifice worth while and stuck his head out of a bedroom window.

"Don't forget, now, to send me those rugs from Damascus!" he shouted.

It all went like clockwork. Glancing back as we drove by the Jaffa Gate I saw the three spies walk away, and there is very often more information in men's backs than in their faces. They walked like laborers returning home with a day's work behind them, finished; not at all like men in doubt, nor as if they suspected they were followed, although in fact they were. Three Sikhs emerged from the corner by the Gate and strolled along behind them. Detailed preparations for the round-up had begun, and the unostentatious mechanism of it all seemed more weird and terrible than the conspiracy itself.

There was a full company of Sikhs standing to arms in a side street leading off the Jaffa Road, but they took no notice of us. Their officer looked keenly at us once, and then very deliberately stared the other way, illustrating how some fighting men make pretty poor dissemblers; every one of his dark-skinned rank and file had observed all the details of our outfit without seeming to see us at all.

"We're using nothing but Sikhs on this job," said Turner. "British troops wouldn't appreciate the delicacy of the situation. Moslems couldn't be trusted not to talk. The Sikhs enjoy the surreptitious part of it, and don't care enough about the politics to get excited. Wish I might be in at the finish, though! Have you any notion what the real objective is?"

"No," said I, and tried not to feel, or look pleased with myself. But no mere amateur can conceal that, in the moment of discovery, he knows more about the inside of an official business than one of the administration's lawful agents. That is nine-tenths of the secret of "bossed" politics —the sheer vanity of being on the inside, "in the know." I suppose I smirked.

"—— this ride to Haifa! What the —— have you done, I wonder, that you should have a front pew? Is the Intelligence short of officers?"

I had done nothing beyond making Grim's acquaintance and by good luck tickling his flair for odd friendship, but thought it better not to say that, so went on lying.

"I don't suppose I know any more than you do."

"Rot! I posted the men who watched you into Djemal's place yesterday, and watched you out again. You acted pretty poorly, if you ask me. It's a marvel we didn't have to go in there and rescue you. I suppose you're another of Grim's favorites. He picks some funny ones. Half the men in jail seem to be friends of his."

I decided to change the subject.

"I was told to change clothes and walk back after a mile or so," I said. "Suppose we don't make it a Marathon."

"Uh!"

I think he was feeling sore enough to take me ten miles for the satisfaction of making me tramp them back to Jerusalem, but it turned out not to be his day for working off grievances. We were bowling along pretty fast, and had just reached open country where it would be a simple matter to change into other clothes without risk of being seen doing it, when we began to be overhauled by another, larger car that came along at a terrific pace. It was still too dark to make out who was in it until it drew almost abreast.

"Kettle, by the Horn Spoon! What next, I wonder! Pull up!" said Turner. "Morning, sir."

THE two cars came to a standstill and the Administrator leaned out.

"I think I can save you a walk," he said, smiling. "How about changing your clothes between the cars and driving back with me?"

I did not even know yet what new disguise I was to assume, but Turner opened a hand-bag and produced a suit of my own clothes and a soft hat.

"Burgled your bedroom," he explained.

All he had forgotten was suspenders. No doubt it would have given him immense joy to think of me walking back ten miles without them.

Kettle gave his orders while I changed.

"You'd better keep going for some time, Turner. No need to go all the way to Haifa, but don't get back to Jerusalem before noon

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at the earliest, and be sure you don't talk to anybody on your way."

Turner drove on, and I got in beside the Administrator.

"Grim tells me you don't object to a certain amount of risk. You've been very useful, and he thinks you would like to see the end of this business. I wouldn't think of agreeing to that, only we shall have to call on you as a witness against Scharnhoff and Noureddin Ali, and as you seem able to keep still about what you know it seems wiser not to change witnesses at this stage. It is highly important that we should have one unofficial observer, who is neither Jew nor Moslem, and who has no private interest to serve. But I warn you, what is likely to happen this morning will be risky."

I looked at the scar on his cheek, and the campaign ribbons, and the attitude of absolute poise that can only be attained by years of familiarity with danger.

"Why do you soldiers always act like nursemaids toward civilians?" I asked him. "We're bone of your bone."

He laughed.

"Entrenched privilege! If we let you know too much you'll think too little of us!"

We stopped at a Jew's store outside the city for suspenders, and then made the circuit outside the walls in a whirlwind of dust, stopping only at each gate to get reports from the officers commanding companies drawn up in readiness to march in and police the city.

"It's all over the place that disaster of some sort is going to happen today," said Kettle. "It only needs a hatful of rumors to set Jerusalemites at one another's throats. But we're ready for them. The first to start trouble this morning will be the first to get it. Now—sorry you've no time for breakfast—here's the Jaffa Gate. Will you walk through the city to that street where Grim talked with you from a roof last night? You'll find him thereabouts. Sure you know the way? Good-by. Good luck! No, you won't need a pass; there'll be nobody to interfere with you."

CHAPTER IX

"Dead or alive, sahib."

I DID get breakfast nevertheless, but in a strange place. The city shutters were coming down only under protest, because, just as in Boston and other hubs of sanctity, shop-looting starts less than five minutes after the police let go control, and there was an average that morning of about ten rumors to the ear.

About the mildest was that the British had decided to vacate and leave the Zionists in charge of things. You couldn't fool an experienced Jew as to what would happen in that event, although any half-baked idiot could get him to listen to the rumor; so they all decided to call it a holiday and leave the shutters up. But there were British officers walking about with memorandum books, and a fifty-pound fine looked more serious than an outbreak that had not occurred yet, after all. So they were opening the shops.

I had nearly reached the Haram-es-Sheriff, and was passing a platoon of Sikhs who dozed beside their rifles near a street corner, when Grim's voice hailed me through the half-open door behind them. He was back in his favorite disguise of a Bedouin, squatting on a mat near the entrance of a vaulted room, where he could see through the door without being seen.

"This is headquarters for the present," he explained. "Soon as we bag the gang we'll run 'em in here quick as lightning. Most likely keep 'em here all day, so's not to have to parade 'em through the streets until after dark. A man's coming soon with coffee and stuff to eat."

"What's become of Suliman?"

"He's shooting craps with two other young villains close to where you left him last night. I'm hoping he'll get word with his mother."

Grim looked more nervous than I had ever seen him. There was a deep frown between his eyes, and he talked as if he were doing it to keep himself from worrying.

"What's eating you?" I asked.

"Noureddin Ali. After all this trouble to bag the whole gang without any fuss there's a chance he's given us the slip. I watched all night to make sure he didn't come out of that door; and he didn't. But I've no proof he's in there. Scharnhoff's in there, and five of the chief conspirators. Noureddin Ali may be; but a man brought me a story an hour ago about seeing him on the city wall. However, here's the packing; let's eat."

He sat and munched gloomily, until presently Goodenough joined us, looking, what with that monocle and one thing and another, as if he had just stepped out of a band-box.

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"Well, Grim, the net's all ready. If that TNT is where you say it is in that big barn behind the fruit-stalls near the Jaffa Gate, it's ours the minute they make a move."

"There isn't a doubt on that point," Grim answered. "Why else should Scharnhoff open a fruit-shop? The license for it was taken out by one of Noureddin Ali's agents, whose brother deals in fruit wholesale and owns that barn. Narayan Singh tracked some suspicious packages to that place four days ago. They'll start to carry it into the city hidden under loads of fruit just as soon as the morning crowd begins to pour in. We only need let them get the first consignment in, so as to have the chain of evidence complete. Are you sure your men will let the first lot go through?"

"Absolutely. Just came from giving them very careful instructions. The minute that disappears into the city they'll close in on the barn and arrest every one they find in there. But what are you gloomy about?"

"I'd hate to miss the big fish."

"You mean Noureddin Ali?"

"It looks to me as if he's been a shade too wise for us. One man swore he saw him on the wall this morning, but he was gone when I sent to make sure. We've got all the rest. There are five in Djemal's Cafe, waiting for the big news; they'll be handcuffed one at a time by the police when they get tired of waiting and come out.

"But I'd rather bag Noureddin Ali than all the others put together. He's got brains, that little beast has. He'd know how to use this story against us with almost as much effect as if he'd pulled the outrage off."

HE HAD hardly finished speaking when Narayan Singh's great bulk darkened the doorway. He closed the door behind him, as if afraid the other Sikhs might learn bad news.

"It is true, *sahib*. He was on the wall. He is there again."

"Have you seen him?"

"Surely. He makes signals to the men who are loading the donkeys now in the door of the barn. It would be a difficult shot; his head hardly shows between the battlements, but I think I could hit him from the road below. Shall I try?"

"No, you'd only scare him into hiding if you miss. Oh, ——! There are three ways up on to the wall at that point. There's no time to block them all—not if he's signaling now. He'll see your men close in on the barn, sir, and beat it for the skyline. Oh, ——!"

"At least we can try to cut him off," said Goodenough. "I'll take some men myself and have a crack at it."

"No use, sir. You'd never catch sight of him. I wish you'd let Narayan Singh take three men, make for the wall by the shortest way, and hunt him if it takes a week."

"Why not? All right. D'you hear that, Narayan Singh?"

"*Atcha, sahib.*"

"You understand?" said Grim. "Keep him moving. Keep after him."

"Do the *sahibs* wish him alive or dead?"

"Either way," said Goodenough.

"If he's gone from the wall when you get there," Grim added, "bring the news. You'll know where to find us."

"*Atcha.*"

The Sikh brought his rifle to the shoulder, faced about, marched out, chose three men from the platoon in the street, and vanished.

"Too bad, too bad!" said Goodenough, but Grim did not answer. He was swearing a blue streak under his breath.

The next to arrive on the scene was Suliman, grinning with delight because he had won all the money of the other urchins, but brimming with news in the bargain. He considered a mere colonel of cavalry beneath notice, and addressed himself to Grim without ceremony.

"My mother brought out oranges in baskets and set them on benches on both sides of the door. Then she went in, and I heard her scream. There was a fight inside."

"D'you care to bet, sir?" asked Grim.

"On what?"

"I'll bet you a hundred piastres Scharnhoff has tried to make his get-away, and they've either killed him or tied him hand and foot. Another hundred on top of that, that Scharnhoff offers to turn state witness, provided he's alive when we show up."

"All right. I'll bet you he hangs."

"Are you coming with us, sir?"

"Wouldn't miss it for a king's ransom."

"The back way out, then."

Grim beckoned the Sikhs into the room, left one man in there in charge of Suliman, who swore blasphemously at being left behind, and led the way down a passage that opened into an alley connecting with a

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maze of others like rat runs, mostly arched over and all smelly with the unwashed gloom of ages. At the end of the last alley we entered was a flight of stone steps, up which we climbed to the roof of the house on which I had seen Grim the night before.

There was a low coping on the side next the street, and some one had laid a lot of bundles of odds and ends against it; lying down, we could look out between those without any risk of being seen from below, but Goodenough made the Sikhs keep well in the background and only we three peered over the edge. About two hundred yards in front of us the Dome of the Rock glistened in the morning sun above the intervening roofs.

THE street was almost deserted, although the guards at either end had been removed for fear of scaring away the conspirators. We watched for about twenty minutes before any one passed but occasional beggars, some of whom stopped to wonder why oranges should stand on sale outside a door with nobody in charge of them. Three separate individuals glanced right and left and then helped themselves pretty liberally from the baskets.

But at last there came five donkeys very heavily loaded with oranges and raisins, in charge of six men, which was a more than liberal allowance. When they stopped at the little stone house in front of us there was another thing noticeable; instead of hitting the donkeys hard on the nose with a thick club, which is the usual way of calling a halt in Palestine, they went to their heads and stopped them reasonably gently; so, although all six men were dressed to resemble peasants, they were certainly nothing of the kind.

Nor were they such wide-awake conspirators as they believed themselves, for they were not in the least suspicious of six other men, also dressed like peasants, who followed them up-street, and sat down in full view with their backs against a wall. Yet I could see quite plainly the scabbard of a bayonet projecting through a hole in the ragged cloak of the nearest of those casual wayfarers.

They had to knock several minutes before the door opened gingerly; then they offloaded the donkeys, and it took two men to carry each basketful, with a third lending a hand in case of accident. Only one man went back with the donkeys, and two of the casual loafers against the wall got up to saunter after him; the other five honest merchants went inside, and we heard the bolt shoot into its iron slot behind them.

"How about it, Grim?" asked Goodenough then.

"Ready, sir. Will you give the order?"

We filed in a hurry down the steps into the alley, ran in a zig-zag down three passages, and reached another alley with a narrow door at its end that faced the street. Grim had made every preparation. There was a heavy baulk of timber lying near the door, with rope-handles knotted into holes bored through it at intervals. The Sikhs picked that up and followed us into the street.

The mechanism of the net was a thing to wonder at. As we emerged through the door the "peasants" who were loafing with their backs against the wall got up and formed a cordon across the street. Simultaneously, although I neither saw nor heard any signal, a dozen Sikhs under a British officer came down the street from the other direction at the double and formed up in line on our left-hand. A moment later, our men were battering the door down with their baulk of timber, working all together as if they had practised the stunt thoroughly.

It was a stout door, three inches thick, of ancient olive-wood and reenforced with forged iron bands. The hinges, too, had been made by hand in the days when, if a man's house was not his fortress, he might just as well own nothing; they were cemented deep into the wall, and fastened to the door itself with half-inch iron rivets. The door had to be smashed to pieces, and the noise we made would have warned the devils in the middle of the world.

"We shouldn't have let them get in with any TNT at all," said Goodenough. "They'll touch it off before we can prevent them."

"Uh-uh! They're not that kind," Grim answered. "They'll fight for their skins. Have your gun ready, sir. They've laid their plans for a time-fuse and a quick getaway. They'll figure the going may be good still if they can once get past us. Look out for a rush!"

But when the door went down at last in a mess of splinters there was no rush—nothing but silence—a dark, square, stone room containing two cots and a table, and fruit scattered all over the floor amid gray dust and

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fragments of cement. Grim laughed curtly.

"Look, sir!"

The fruit-baskets were on the floor by one of the cots, and the TNT containers were still in them. They had tipped out the fruit, and then run at the sound of the battering ram.

GOODENOUGH stepped into the room, and we followed him. Beyond the table, half-hidden by a great stone slab, was a dark hole in the floor. Evidently they had tried to cover up the hole from the inside, but had found the stone too heavy. The Sikhs dragged it clear and disclosed the mouth of a tunnel, rather less than a man's height and sloping sharply downward.

"What we need now is mustard gas. Smoke 'em out," said Goodenough.

"Might kill 'em," Grim objected.

"That'd be too bad, wouldn't it!"

"We could starve 'em out, for that matter," said Grim. "But they've probably got water down there, and perhaps food. Every hour of delay adds to the risk of rioting. We've got to get this hole sealed up permanently, and deny that it was ever opened."

"We could do that at once! But I won't be a party to sealing 'em up alive."

"Besides, sir, they've certainly got fire-arms, and they *might* just possibly have one can of TNT down there."

"All right," said Goodenough, "I'll lead the way down."

"I've a plan," said Grim.

He took one of the fruit-baskets and began breaking it up.

"Who has a white shirt?" he asked.

I was the haberdasher. The others, Sikhs included, were all clothed in khaki from coat to skin. Grim's Bedouin array was dark-brown. I peeled the shirt off, and Grim rigged it on a frame of basket-work, with a clumsy pitch-forked arrangement of withes at the bottom. The idea was not obvious until he twisted the withes about his waist; then, when he bent down, the shirt stood up erect above him.

"If you don't mind, sir, we'll have two or three Sikhs go first. Have 'em take their boots off and crawl quietly as flat down as they can keep. I'll follow 'em with this contraption. They'll be able to see the white shirt dimly against the tunnel, and if they do any shooting they'll aim at that. Then if the rest of you keep low behind me we've a good chance to rush them before they can do any damage."

I never met a commanding officer more free from personal conceit than Goodenough, and as I came to know more of him later on that characteristic stood out increasingly. He was not so much a man of ideas as one who could recognize them. That done, he made use of his authority to back up his subordinates, claiming no credit for himself but always seeing to it that they got theirs.

The result was that he was simultaneously despised and loved—despised by the self-advertising school, of which there are plenty in every army, and loved with something like fanaticism by his junior officers and men.

"I agree to that," he said simply, screwing in his monocle. Then he turned and instructed the Sikhs in their own language.

"You follow last," he said to me. "Now—all ready?"

He had a pistol in one hand and a flash-light in the other, but had to stow them both away again in order to crawl in the tunnel. Grim had no weapon in sight. The two Sikhs who were to lead had stripped themselves of everything that might make a noise, but the others kept both boots and rifles, with bayonets fixed, for it did not much matter what racket they made. In fact, the more noise we, who followed, made the better, since that would draw attention from the Sikhs in front, all we had to do was to keep our bodies below Grim's kite affair, out of the probable line of fire.

Nevertheless, that dark hole was untempting. A dank smell came out of it, like the breath of those old Egyptian tombs in which the bones of horses, buried with their masters, lie all about on shelves. You couldn't see into it more than a yard or two, for the only light came through the doorway of the windowless room, and the tunnel led into the womb of rock where, perhaps, no light had been since Solomon's day.

But the leading Sikhs went in without hesitation and got down on their bellies. They might have been swallowed whole for all that I heard or saw of them from that minute. You could guess why the Turks and Germans had not really craved to meet those Indians out in No-man's-land.

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GRIM went in on all-fours like a weird animal, with my shirt dancing on its frame above his back. Goodenough went next, peering through that window-pane like a deep-sea fish. All the rest of the Sikhs went after him in Indian file, dragging their rifle-butts along the tunnel floor and making noise enough to remind you of the New York subway.

I went in at the tail end, trying at intervals to peer around a khaki-covered Punjab rump, alternately getting my head and fingers bruised by heels I could not see and a rifle-butt that only moved in jerks when you didn't expect it to. My nose was bleeding at the end of ten yards.

But you couldn't keep your distance. Whenever the men in front checked at some obstruction or paused to listen, all those behind closed up; and by the time those behind had run their noses against iron-shod heels the men in front were on their way again. You couldn't see a thing until you rammed your head into it, and then the sense of touch gave you a sort of sight suggestion, as when you see things in a dream. And as for sound, the tunnel acted like a whispering gallery, mixing all the noises up together, so that you could not guess whether a man had spoken, or a stone had fallen, or a pistol had gone off, or all three.

Once or twice, when the line closed up on itself caterpillar-fashion, I was able to make out that white shirt dancing dimly; and once, where some trick of the tunnel sorted out the sounds, I caught a scrap of conversation.

"D'you suppose they'll be able to see the shirt?"

"—— knows. I can hardly make it out from here."

"When it looks like the right time to you, sir, turn the flashlight on it."

"All right. ——! Keep on going—you nearly knocked out my eyeglass!"

Even over my shoulder, looking backward, I could see practically nothing, for what little came in through the opening was swallowed by the first few yards. There was a suspicion of paleness in the gloom behind, and the occasional suggestion of an outline of rough wall; no more.

Nor was the tunnel straight by any means. It turned and twisted constantly; and at every bend the men who originally closed it had built up a wall of heavy masonry that Scharnhoff had had to force his way through. In those places the broken stones were now lying in the fairway, as you knew by the suffering when you came in contact with them; some of the split-off edges were as sharp as glass.

It was good fun, all the same, while it lasted. If we had been crawling down a sewer, or a modern passage of any kind, the sense of danger and discomfort would, no doubt, have overwhelmed all other considerations. But, even supposing Scharnhoff had been on a vain hunt, and the veritable tomb of the Kings of Judah did not lie somewhere in the dark ahead of us, we were nevertheless under the foundations of Solomon's temple, groping our way into mysteries that had not been disclosed, perhaps, since the days when the Queen of Sheba came and paid her homage to the most wise king. You could feel afraid, but you couldn't wish you weren't there.

I have no idea how long it took to crawl the length of that black passage. It seemed like hours. I heard heavy footsteps behind me after a while. Some one following in a hurry, who could see no better than we could, kept stumbling over the falling masonry; and once, when he fell headlong, I heard him swear titanically in a foreign tongue. I called back to whoever it was to crawl unless he wanted to be shot, but probably the words were all mixed up in the tunnel echoes, for he came on as before.

Then all at once Goodenough flashed on the light for a fraction of a second and the shirt showed like a fantom out of blackness. The instant answer to that was a regular volley of shots from in front. The flash of several pistols lit up the tunnel, and bullets rattled off the walls and roof. The shirt fell, shot loose from its moorings, and the leading Sikhs gave a shout as they started to rush forward.

WE ALL surged after them, but there was a sudden check, followed by a babel worse than when a dozen pi-dogs fight over a rubbish-heap. You couldn't make head or tail of it, except that something desperate was happening in front, until suddenly a man with a knife in his hand, too wild with fear to use it, came leaping and scrambling over the backs of Sikhs, like a forward bucking the line. The Sikh in front of me knelt upright and collared him round the knees. The two went down together, I on top of both of them

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with blood running down my arm, for the man had started to use his knife at last, slashing out at random, and I rather think that slight cut he gave me saved the Sikh's life; but you can make any kind of calculation afterwards about what took place in absolute darkness without the least fear of being proven wrong, and since the Sikh and I agreed on that point no other opinion matters.

I think that between the two of us we had that man about nonplused, although we couldn't see. I had his knife, and the Sikh was kneeling on his stomach, when a hundred and eighty pounds of bone and muscle catapulted at us from the rear and sprawled on us headlong, saved by only a miracle from skewering some one with a bayonet as he fell.

He laughed while he fought, this newcomer, and even asked questions in the Sikh tongue. He had my arm in a grip like a vise and wrenched at it until I cursed him; then he found a leg in the dark and nearly broke it, only to discover it was the other Sikh's. Still laughing, as if blindfolded fighting was his meat and drink, he reached again, and this time his fingers closed on enemy flesh. Judging by the yells, they hurt, too.

There must have been at least another minute of cat-and-dog-fight struggling—hands being stepped on and throats clutched—before Goodenough rolled himself free from an antagonist in front and, groping for the flashlight he had dropped at the first assault, found it and flashed it on. The first thing I recognized by its light was the face of Narayan Singh, with wonderful white teeth grinning through his black beard within six inches of my nose.

"—— you!" I laughed. "You weigh a ton. Get off—you nearly killed me!"

"Nearly in war-time means a whole new life to lose, *sahib*. Be pleased to make the most of it!" he answered.

Within two minutes after that we had eight prisoners disarmed and subdued, some of them rather the worse for battery. The amazing thing was that we hadn't a serious casualty among the lot of us. We could have totaled a square yard of skin, no doubt, and a bushel of bruises (if that is the way you measure them) but mine was the only knife-wound, so I felt beastly proud.

By the light of the electric torch we dragged and prodded the prisoners back whence they had come, and presently Grim or somebody found a lantern and lit it. We found ourselves in a square cavern—a perfect cube it looked like—about thirty feet wide each way.

In the midst was a plain stone coffer with its lid removed and leaned against it; and in the coffer lay a tall man's skeleton, with the chin still bound in linen browned with age. There were other fragments of linen here and there, but the bones had been moved and had fallen more or less apart.

Over in one corner were two large bundles done up in modern gunny-bags, and Grim went over to examine them.

"Hello!" he said. "Here's Scharnhoff and his lady friend!"

He ripped the lashings of both bundles and disclosed the Austrian and the woman, gagged and tied, both almost unconscious from inability to breathe but not much hurt otherwise.

THE Sikhs herded the prisoners, old alligator-eyes among them, into another corner; Grim tore my shirt into strips to bandage my arm with; and Goodenough talked with Narayan Singh, while we waited for Scharnhoff to recover full consciousness.

"Those murderers!" he gasped at last. "*Schweinehunde!*"

"Better spill the beans, old boy," Grim said, smiling down at him. "You'll hang at the same time they do, if you can't tell a straight story."

"Ach! My heart is broken. What do I care if I hang!"

"You'll care this time tomorrow. I'm giving you a fair chance now. Better make the most of it."

"Ach! I do not care! There were no manuscripts—nothing! I don't know whose skeleton that is—some old king—David, perhaps; for that is not David's real tomb that the guides show. Hang those murderers and I am satisfied!"

"Your story may help hang them. Come on, out with it!"

"Have you caught Noureddin Ali?"

"Never mind."

"But I do mind! And you should mind!" Scharnhoff sat up excitedly. He was dressed in the Arab garments I had seen in his cupboard that day when Grim and I called on him, with a scholar's turban that made him look very distinguished in spite of his disarray.

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"That Noureddin Ali is a devil! Together we would look for the Tomb of the Kings. Together we would smuggle out the manuscripts—translate them together—publish the result together. Oh, he was full of enthusiasm! It was not until last night, when I had broken that last obstruction down and discovered nothing but this coffin that I learned his real plan. The devil intended all along to fill this tomb with high explosive and destroy the mosque above with everybody in it! Curse him!"

"Never mind cursing him," said Grim, "tell us the story."

"He sent oranges here, all marked with the labels of a Zionist colony. He himself disappeared, and when I questioned his men they told me the explosive would be brought in hidden under fruit in baskets. I waited then in the hope of killing him myself——"

"Hah-hah!" laughed Grim.

"That is true! But they bound me, and later on bound the woman, and laid us here to be blown up together with the mosque."

Grim turned to Goodenough, who had been listening.

"Do I win the bet, sir?"

"Yes. Narayan Singh informs me that his man was gone by the time they reached the wall."

"Sure, or he wouldn't be here without him. I've been thinking, sir; we've one chance left to bag Noureddin Ali. Will you give me *carte blanche?*"

"Yes. Go ahead."

Grim crossed the place to the corner where old alligator-eyes stood herded with the other prisoners.

"Are you guilty?" he demanded.

"No. Guilty of nothing. I came out of curiosity to see what was happening here."

"Thought so. Can you be silent? Will you promise to be silent? Then go! Get out of here!"

He did not wait for a second urging, nor stay to question his good luck, but went off in a shambling hurry.

"You are mad!" exclaimed Scharnhoff. "That man is the next-worst!"

"We can get him any time we want him, sir," said Grim. "He lacks Noureddin Ali's gift of slipperiness. What's more, he'll try to consult his chief, and it's likely he knows where to find him."

He turned to Narayan Singh.

"Follow that man, but don't let him know he's followed. He'll show you where Noureddin Ali is. Get him this time!"

"Dead or alive, *sahib?*"

"Either."

CHAPTER X

"All men are equal in the dark."

THE first thing Goodenough did after Grim had sent Narayan Singh off on his deadly mission was to summon the sheikh of the Dome of the Rock. He himself went to fetch him rather than risk having the sheikh bring a crowd of witnesses, who would be sure to talk afterwards; the all-important thing was to conceal the fact that sacrilege had been committed, but it was also necessary to establish the fact that Zionists had had no hand in it.

"You see," Grim explained, sitting on the edge of the stone coffin, "we could hold Jerusalem; but if word of this business were to spread far and wide, you couldn't hold two or three hundred million fanatics; and believe me, they'd cut loose!"

"The sheikh must realize that," said I. "What do you bet me he won't try to blackmail the Administration on the strength of it?"

"I'll bet you my job! Watch the old bird see sense before I'm through with him!"

While we waited we tried to get an opinion out of Scharnhoff about the coffin and the skeleton inside it, but the old fellow was heart-broken, and I think he told the truth when he said he couldn't explain it.

"What is there to say of it, except that it is very ancient? There is no decoration. The coffin is beautifully shaped out of one solid piece of stone, but that is all. The skeleton is that of an old man, who seems to have been wounded once or twice in battle. The linen is good, but there is no jewelry; no ornaments. And it is buried here in a very sacred place, so probably, it is one of the Jewish kings, or else one of the prophets. It might be King David—who knows? And what do I care? It is what a man set down on parchment, and not his bones that interest me!"

The sheikh arrived at last, following Goodenough down the dark passage with the supreme nonchalance of the priest too long familiar with sacred places to be thrilled or frightened by them. He stood in the entrance gazing about him, blinking speculatively through the folds of fat surrounding

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his bright eyes. Goodenough took the lantern and held it close to the prisoners' faces one by one.

"You see?" he said. "All Syrians. All Moslems. Not a Jew among them. I'll take you and show you the others presently."

"What will you do with them?"

"That's for a court to decide. Hang them, most likely. They were plotting murder."

"They will talk at the trial."

"Behind closed doors!" said Goodenough.

"Ahum!" said the sheikh, stroking his beard. It would not have been compatible with either his religion or his racial consciousness not to try to make the utmost of the situation. "This would be a bad thing for all the Christian governments if the tale leaked out. Religious places have been desecrated. There would be inflammation of Moslem prejudices everywhere."

"It would be worse for you!" retorted Grim, and the sheikh stared hard at him, stroking his beard again.

"How so, Jimgrim? Have I had a hand in this?"

"This is your famous Bir-el-Arwah, where, as you tell your faithful, the souls of the dead come to pray twice a week. This is the gulf beneath the Rock of Abraham that you tell them reaches to the middle of the world. Look at it! Shall we publish flashlight photographs?"

The sheikh's eyes twinkled as he recognized the force of that argument. He turned it over in his mind for a full minute before he answered.

"You can not be expected to understand spiritual things," he said at last. "However," looking up, "this is not under the Rock. This is another place."

Goodenough pulled a compass from his pocket, but Grim shook his head.

"Go on," said Grim. "What of it?"

"It is better to close this place up and say nothing."

"Except this," Goodenough retorted: "you will say at the first and every succeeding opportunity that you know it is not true that Zionists tried to blow up the Dome of the Rock."

"How do I know they did not try?"

"Perhaps we' better ask the Administrator to come and inspect this place officially and put the exact facts on record," Goodenough retorted.

"You understand, don't you?" said Grim. "Everything we've done until now has been strictly unofficial. There's a difference."

The sheikh glanced cautiously at me. I did look unofficial.

"And this *effendi?*" he asked. "What of him?"

"He is commended to your special benevolence," said Grim. "The way to keep a man like him discreet is to make a friend of him. Treat him as you do me, and let it go at that."

The sheikh nodded, and that proved to be the beginning of a rather intimate acquaintance with him that stood me in good stead more than once afterward. The influence that a man in his position can exert, if he cares to, is almost beyond the belief of those who pin their faith to money and mere officialdom.

THE prisoners were marched out, and all except Scharnhoff and the woman were confined temporarily in the room in which Grim and I breakfasted. The woman was taken to the jail until an American missionary could be found to take charge of her; they always hand the awkward cases over to Americans, partly because they have a gift for that sort of thing, but also because, in case of need, you can blame them afterward without much risk of a reaction.

Goodenough left a guard of Sikhs outside the street entrance to keep out all intruders until the sheikh could collect a few trustworthy masons to seal up the passage again. Grim, Scharnhoff and I walked quite leisurely to Grim's quarters, where Grim left the two of us together in the room downstairs while he changed into uniform.

"What will he do with me?" asked Scharnhoff. He was not far from collapse, and lay back in the armchair with his mouth open. I got him some of Grim's whisky.

"Nothing ungenerous," I said. "If you were going to be hanged you'd be in jail this minute."

"Do you—do you think he will let me go?"

"Not until he's through with you," said I, "if I'm any judge of him."

"What use can I be to him? My life is not worth a minute's purchase if Noureddin Ali finds me—he or that other whom they let go. Oh, what idiots to let Noureddin Ali give them the slip, and then to turn the second-worst one loose as well! Those

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English are all mad, and that man Grim has been corrupted by them!"

Grim hardly looked corrupted, rather iron-hard and energetic when he returned presently in his major's uniform. It was a phase of him I had not seen before. The genial air was gone. You could tell the color of his eyes now; they were blue-gray, and there was a light in them that should warn the wary not to oppose him unless a real fight was wanted. His manner was brisk, brusk, striding over trifles. He nodded to me.

"You sick of this?" he asked.

"How many times? I want to see it through."

"All right. Your own risk."

He turned on Scharnhoff, standing straight in front of him, with both arms folded behind his back.

"Look here. Have you any decency in that body of yours? Do you want to prove it? Or would you rather hang like a common scoundrel? Which is it to be?"

"I—I—I—I—do not understand you. What do you mean?"

"Are you game to risk your neck decently or would you rather have the hangman put you out of pain?"

"I—I—God knows, I do not wish to hang! I—pray tell me what you mean. I was not a willing partner in that conspiracy, Major Grim. Surely you appreciate that? If I had known what they intended I would never have lent myself to such a purpose."

"Will you play a man's part now?"

"If you will accord me opportunity, at least I will do my best."

"Understand; you'll not be allowed to live here afterward. You'll be repatriated to Austria, or wherever you come from. All you're offered is a chance to clean your slate morally before you go."

"I shall be grateful."

"Will you obey?"

"Absolutely—to the limit of my power, that is to say. I am not an athlete—not a man of active habits."

"Very well. Listen."

He turned to me again, and though a little of the iron went out of his voice in recognition that I was not his prisoner, his eye still blazed and his manner was almost equally downright.

"Take Scharnhoff to his house. You know the way. When afternoon comes, set a table in the garden in front and let him sit at it. He may as well read. If nothing happens before dark, take him out a lamp and some food, but he mustn't move away. He'd better change into his proper clothes first. Your job will be to keep an eye on him until I come. You'd better keep out of sight as much as possible, especially after dark. Better watch him through the window. And, by the way, take this pistol. If Scharnhoff disobeys you, shoot him."

He turned again on Scharnhoff.

"I hope you're not fooling yourself. I should say the chance is two or three to one that you'll come out of this alive. If you're killed, you may flatter yourself that's a mighty sight cleaner than hanging. If you come out with a whole skin, you shall leave the country without even going to jail. Time to go now."

I SLIPPED the heavy pistol into my pocket and led the way without saying a word. Scharnhoff followed me, rather drearily, and we walked side-by-side toward the German Colony, he looking exactly like one of those respectable and devout educated Arabs of the old style, who teach from commentaries on the Koran. We excited no comment whatever.

"What will he do? What is his purpose?" Scharnhoff asked me after a while. "If a man is in danger of death, he likes to know the reason—the purpose of it."

I had a better than faint glimmering of Grim's purpose, but saw no necessity to air my views on the subject.

"I'm amused," said I, "at the strictly unofficial status of all this. You see, I'm no more connected with this administration than you are. I'm as alien as you. You might say, I'm a stranger in Jerusalem. Yet, here I am, with a perfectly official pistol, loaded with official cartridges, under unofficial orders to shoot you at the first sign of disobedience. And—strictly unofficially, between you and me—I shan't hesitate to do it!"

He contrived a smile out of the depths of his despondency.

"I wonder—should you shoot me—what they would do to you afterward."

"Something unofficial," I suggested. "But we'll leave that up to them. The point is——"

"Oh, don't worry! You shall have no trouble from me,"

It took a long time to reach his house, for

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the poor old chap was suffering from lack of sleep, and physical weariness, as well as disappointment, and I had to let him sit down by the wayside once or twice. Being in hard condition, and not much more than half his age, I had almost forgotten that I had not slept the night before, and keen curiosity as to what might happen between now and midnight was keeping me going.

He could hardly drag himself into the house, but a bath, and some food I found in the larder restored him considerably, and he helped me carry out the table. He chose a book of Schiller's poems to take with him, but did not read it; he sat with his elbows on the table and his back toward the front door, resting his chin gloomily on both fists. He remained in that attitude all afternoon, and for all I know slept part of the time.

Between him and the window of the room I sat in were some shrubs that obscured the view considerably. I could see Scharnhoff through them easily enough, but I don't think he could have seen me, and certainly no one could have seen me from the road. I feel fairly sure that nobody saw me until it began to grow dark and I carried out the lamp. Even then, it was Scharnhoff who struck the match and lit it, so that I was in shadow all the time—probably unrecognizable.

It had been fairly easy to keep awake until then, but as the room grew darker and darker, and nothing happened, the yearning to fall asleep became actual agony. It was a rather large, square room, crowded up with a jumble of antiquities. The only real furniture was the window-seat on which I knelt, and an oblong table; but even the table was laid on its side to make room for a battered Roman bust standing on the floor between its legs.

I had left the door wide open, in order to be able to hear anything that might happen in the house; but the only sound came from a couple of rats that gnawed and rustled interminably somewhere among the rubbish in a corner.

It must have been nearly eight o'clock, and I believe I had actually dozed off at last, kneeling in the window, when all at once it seemed to me that the rats were making a different, and greater noise than I ever heard rats make. It was pitch-black dark. I couldn't see my hand in front of me. My first thought was to glance through the window at Scharnhoff, but something—intuition, I suppose—made me draw aside from the window instead.

Then, beyond any shadow of a doubt, I heard a man move, and the hair rose all up the back of my head. I remembered the pistol, clutched it, and found voice enough for two words:

"Who's there?"

"Hee-hee!" came the answer from behind the table. "So Major Jimgrim lied about a broken leg, and thought to trap Noureddin Ali, did he! Don't move, Major Jimgrim! Don't move! We will have a little talk before we bid each other good-by! I can not last long in any case, for the cursed Sikhs are after me. I would rather you killed me than the Sikhs; but I would like to kill you also. If you move before I give you leave you are a dead man, Major Jimgrim! Hee-hee! You can not see me! Better keep still!"

IF IT was flattering to be mistaken for Grim in the dark, it was hardly pleasant in the circumstances. For a moment I was angry, for it flashed across my mind that Grim had planned this; but on second thought I refused to believe he would deceive me about Scharnhoff and use me for a decoy without my permission. I decided to keep still and see what happened.

"Do you think you deserve to live, Major Jimgrim?" Noureddin Ali's voice went on. I heard him shift his position. He was probably trying to see my outline against the dark wall in order to take aim. "You, a foreigner, interfering in the politics of this land? But for you there would have been an explosion today that would have liberated all the Moslem world. But for that lie about a broken leg you would have died a little after ten o'clock this morning —hee-hee—instead of now! Don't move, Major Jimgrim! You and I will have a duel presently. There is lots of time. The Sikhs lost track of me."

I did move. I stooped down close to the floor, so that he might fire over my head if, as I suspected, he was merely gaining time in order to take sure aim. I tried to see which end of the table he was talking from, but he was hidden completely.

"Do you think you should go free, to perpetrate more cowardly interference, after spoiling that well-laid plan? Hee-hee! You poor fool! Busybodies such as you invariably overreach themselves. Having tricked

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me two or three times, you thought, didn't you? that you could draw me here to kill Scharnhoff, that poor old sheep. You were careful, weren't you? to let Omar Mahmoud go, in order that he might tell me how Scharnhoff had turned witness against us. And the Sikhs followed Omar Mahmoud until he found me; and then they hunted me. Hee-hee! Don't move! Was that the plan? Simultaneously then, being yourself only a fool after all, you flatter me and underestimate my intelligence. Hee-hee!

"You were right in thinking I would not submit to capture and death without first wreaking vengeance. But vengeance on such a sheep as Scharnhoff, with Major Jimgrim still alive? What possessed you? Were you mad? I satisfied myself an hour ago that Scharnhoff was the bait, which the redoubtable Major Jimgrim would be watching. Perhaps I shall deal with Scharnhoff afterward—hee-hee!—who knows? Now—now that we understand each other, shall we fight that duel? Are you ready?"

I supposed that meant that he could not see me and had given up hope of it. He would like to have me move first, so as to judge my exact whereabouts by sound. I reached out very cautiously, and rapped the muzzle of my pistol on the floor twice.

He fired instantly, three shots in succession. The bullets went wild to my left and brought down showers of plaster from the wall. I feared he might see me by the *pistol-flash*, but did not fire back. There was no need. Something moved swiftly like a black ghost through the open door. There was a thud, and the ring of a steel swivel, and a scream.

"Has the *sahib* a match?" said a gruff voice that I thought I recognized.

I was trembling—excitement, of course—only ministers and women and foreigners ever feel afraid! It took me half a minute to find the match-box, and the other half to strike a light.

Narayan Singh was standing by the end of the table, wiping blood off his bayonet with a piece of newspaper. He looked cool enough to have carried the paper in his pocket for that purpose. I got up, feeling ashamed to be seen crouching on the floor, but Narayan Singh smiled approval.

"You did well, *sahib*. All men are equal in the dark. Until he fired first there was nothing wise to do but hide."

"How long have you been here?" I asked.

"Five minutes. I only waited for a sure thrust. But hah! the *sahib* feels like a dead man come to life again, eh? Well I know that feeling!"

The match burned my fingers and I struck another one, and as I did that Grim stood in the doorway, smiling.

"Is he dead?" he asked.

"Surely, *sahib*. Shall I go now and get that other one—that Omar Mahmoud?"

"No need," said Grim. "They rounded him up five minutes after he had found Noureddin."

"Then have I done all that was required of me?"

"You bet you have! Here, shake hands; you're a —— good man, Narayan Singh!"

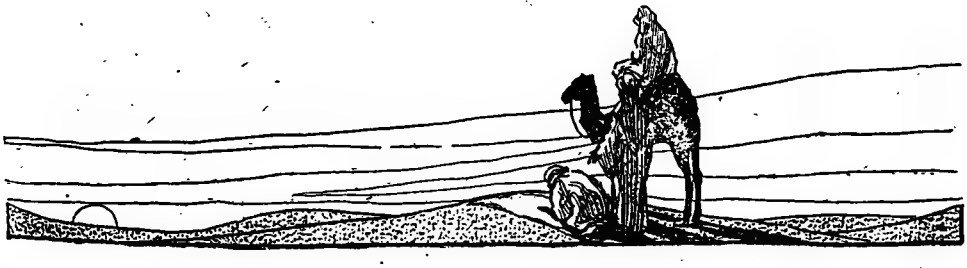
The match went out and I struck a third one. Grim turned to me at last.

"Hungry?" he asked.

"Sleepy," said I.

"Oh, to —— with sleep! Let's bring old Scharnhoff into the other room, dig out some eats and drinks, and get a story out of him. All right, Narayan Singh; there'll be a guard here in ten minutes to take charge of that body. After that, dismiss. I'll report you to Colonel Goodenough for being an honest-to-gosh good soldier."

"My colonel *sahib* knew that years ago," the great Sikh answered quietly.



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THE ACCOUNTING

By RUSSELL A. BOGGS

Author of "The San Marcos Affair," "Safe for Sam," etc.

IT WAS at St. Joe that old "Dad" Carlett had joined Joe Reilly. Strangers then, ten days of travel together had developed a mutual attraction which soon brought about an exchange of data—names, destination and so on—as they worked their way north and west on uncertain freight-trains. On occasion they traveled at fair speed, while at other times they merely dallied along, seeming to dodge into every siding to allow some train or other to pass.

To neither, however, did delays appear to matter particularly. Dad invariably would run his fingers through his kinky gray locks when something held up their progress.

"Since this probably'll be my last trip, Joe, I'm in no special hurry," he would observe to the younger man. "It won't matter to Lem whether I get in this week or next."

"Sure," Reilly would agree understandingly. "Take our time and view the country."

In the Idaho hills they now leaned at ease against the side of an empty gondola and watched a long east-bound train pass, their own extra having taken the siding as usual.

"Just around this next curve we'll cross Arrow Creek," Dad informed Joe. "Then something like a mile beyond that we come to Monitor. That's where I want to land, you know."

His voice was heavy with regret at the coming parting. Their days together had been pleasant.

"Yes, you told me your brother was to meet you there," returned Joe.

He also was sorry that their paths were soon to diverge. Within him a genuine affection had sprung up for this gentle old man who was so cheery and unselfish.

"Didn't you say his claim was somewhere along this Arrow Creek?"

"That's what Lem said in his letter. Few miles back from the I. & O. Railroad," replied Dad. "He's been prospectin' round these hills for twenty years, and he wrote me that at last he'd struck a pay streak. Nothin' great, he said, but good enough to keep a couple old codgers like him and me. We can work a little, and hunt and fish and moralize the rest of the time. 'So come on, Dave; time us two was settlin' down,' he says."

Old Dad sighed in anticipation.

"That's what he wrote."

"Yes," said Joe simply.

He had been told the same thing a score of times within the last few days; he could appreciate how much Dad was looking forward to the reunion with his brother.

"Sounds good to me," said Dad quietly. "That's right; time we was settlin' down."

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THE caboose of the east-bound freight was just passing. Suddenly Carlett seized Reilly's arm.

"Down!" he exclaimed. "Down, Joe!"

Together they ducked down inside the empty gondola. Reilly's gaze questioned his companion.

"Did you see that fellow peepin' out the caboose?" said the older man. "You didn't? Well, that was Smeed; the meanest bull that ever walked the earth! Ever hear of him?"

Joe shook his head.

"Guess not. Never happened to hit up here on this line before."

"I've traveled it before; I know him. The Killer, that's what he's called. Seems like he'd rather shoot a man than arrest him."

Dad peeked carefully over the side, the caboose by that time being some distance away.

"A cold-blooded beast! He shot at me once just because I happened to be walking through one of the yards."

Their freight began to pull out of the siding. Dad stood up.

"Hope he didn't see us. If he did he likely as not would climb off that other extra and get on this one."

"Think we better get off?" asked Joe.

Carlett wagged his gray head in the negative.

"No; let's take a chance. I'd hate to unload when I'm this near Monitor."

The gondola was sandwiched in between two box cars. Carlett looked at the one ahead.

"Might be wise to get up on that box car," he suggested. "If Smeed did slip on we can see him coming better."

"All right," agreed Joe. "Let's do that."

Carlett was first up the ladder. The extra had by that time passed out of the switch and on to the main line. Still rolling gently, the engine, ten cars ahead, pulled on to the Arrow Creek trestle.

Reilly was just grasping the box-car ladder when he heard a voice behind him.

"Climb off, you ——! Climb off, quick!"

"Smeed!" Joe heard Dad gasp.

Quickly Joe scrambled up on Carlett's car. He looked back. On top of the box car immediately in the rear of the gondola stood a solid, grim-jawed, thin-lipped man. Smeed had transferred trains even more quickly than they had thought possible.

"Why don't you hit the cinders?" Smeed bellowed.

Old Dad looked down. Their car by then had started to creep over the long trestle. Arrow Creek could have been called a river—it was that wide—at the I. & O., being all of forty yards from bank to bank. A temperamental stream, with here sparkling shallows and there unruffled depths. Thirty feet below Carlett the clear water flowed unhurriedly, deeper than a tall man is long.

"Just as soon as we get across," said Dad mildly to Smeed.

He made a step toward the ladder at the far end of the car.

Joe saw Smeed's cruel countenance flash an even more savage expression than usual. The officer whipped out a pistol.

"No, by ——!" he cried. "You'll get off right now!"

THE thing was incredible—too wantonly needless and inhuman for belief. Yet Joe saw the pistol flame, saw Old Dad spin around uncertainly. Joe sprang to aid him. But before he could clutch Carlett, the old man had staggered sidewise and toppled over the edge of the car-roof. He turned completely over once, then plunged into the water below.

For only an instant did Joe hesitate. The train had been moving very slowly, for the engine had not yet begun to pick up speed. The whole action had taken place so quickly that the car he stood on was not much past the middle of the trestle. He faced the Killer, his eyes blazing.

"You —— beast!" he cried passionately. "You dirty dog! I'll see that you pay for this if it's the last thing I ever do!"

He perceived the sneer that came into Smeed's face as the officer raised his gun again. Joe looked down and saw Carlett's gray head come to the surface, and at once he dived from the car.

It was a beautiful dive. His long, lean body curved through the air, then disappeared under the water sweetly, with scarcely a splash.

He came to the surface cautiously, for he did not know but that Smeed might shoot again! He had struck the water some forty feet from Carlett, but once underneath the surface he had swerved in the direction which he judged would bring him toward his friend. His judgment had been good. When his head popped out of water

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he beheld Dad within arm's length, evidently coming up for the second time. Joe grasped the gray head.

He looked up then for Smeed. He saw the officer, now across the trestle and still on top of the box car, looking back. But a pine-tree along the track at that instant intervened and shut him from sight. Joe gave all his attention to Carlett.

The older man's eyes were closed. Joe at once turned him on his back, slid under him so that he rested across his shoulders and started for shore. He soon reached it, having not more than twenty yards to swim.

With his feet on the bottom and in water up to his knees, Joe took Dad in his arms and waded out. Placing him on the ground, Reilly swiftly examined him for the wound. He quickly found it. Smeed's bullet had struck the old man in the right breast. The cold water of the stream had served to check the flow of blood; but Joe could see that it still was welling from the hurt.

With strips from his own and Carlett's clothing Reilly bound the wound up as best he could. He could feel no pulse and could detect no heart-beat.

Joe finished his bandaging.

"I don't know whether or not he got you for keeps, Dad," he said, speaking aloud slowly. "But whichever it is, I'll see that dirty dog!"

He nodded emphatically, his eyes cold and hard, his jaw set.

"I'm promising you that; I'll see him!"

While he was speaking he was thinking, too, of what was to be done right now. Monitor was only about a mile beyond Arrow Creek, Carlett had said. From Dad's talk he supposed there must be a small town there. Probably there would be a depot; possibly a doctor.

"That's the place to go," decided Joe. "His brother Lem's claim is up this creek somewhere, but even if I knew just where I'd never be able to lug Dad over this rough country."

He looked up at the rocks and forest-clad hills.

"No; Monitor is the place."

He lifted Carlett and swung him so that he rested well up over his back, Dad's head drooping over his right shoulder. Then, grasping leg and arm, he started. His inert companion was not a heavy man—about a hundred and fifty, he figured as he climbed the embankment of the I. & O.

"Guess we can make it, Dad," puffed Joe, and started down the track to the westward.

AT THE south end of a long, deep valley lies Monitor. A dozen small abodes, a store, a post-office, a railroad depot and a few other miscellaneous shacks comprise the buildings. A quiet town in the ever green hills.

About two o'clock this Tuesday afternoon, Peter Denman, agent-operator for the I. & O., looked out the window at the front of his little station office. Down the track from the east came a man bearing a burden. Denman stared.

"By thunder!" he said. "That fellow's got a man on his back!"

The agent was naturally a sympathetic man. He hurried out of the depot and met the burden-bearer.

"What's the trouble, friend?" he inquired. "Hurt, or sick?"

He indicated the limp figure on the other man's back.

"Shot," returned Joe Reilly. "In the breast. Is there a doctor in town?"

"Now ain't that lucky," said Denman. "About the doctor, I mean. Usually you'll find him out more than in. But he's here now. Saw him up at the post-office not ten minutes ago."

"That's good," said Joe. "Lead me to his place."

At once, with Denman leading the way, they went around the depot and up Monitor's one street. A horse, saddled, stood in front of the store.

"That's his horse," said the agent. "This way."

The store was located on the first floor of the only two-storied building in town. An outside stairway led up to the second floor and a sign at the foot of the steps said:

DR. HINKLE—WALK UP

Several men came from the door of the store, evidently having glimpsed the three. They stared with some curiosity.

"Doc's in," offered a bare-headed coatless man—apparently the storekeeper. "Just went up."

With the others he drew near.

"Here, neighbor," he said. "Let us help."

At Joe's nod of acquiescence they eased,

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Carlett from his shoulders. Then carefully they carried the old man up the steps.

They entered a little room on the second floor. The agent rapped loudly on an inner door. It opened and a sandy-haired, middle-aged man appeared.

"Doc," said Denman, "here's a man's been shot."

The doctor threw the door wide.

"Bring him in," he directed.

Carlett was carried into the inner office and placed upon a couch there. Doctor Hinkle at once bent over him.

The little group of men stood around silently while he made his examination. He looked briefly at the wound, then felt of the pulse and put his ear over Carlett's heart. His face was grave. Presently he looked up.

"How did this happen?" he asked.

The others all looked at Reilly.

"We—he and I—were on a freight-train coming west this afternoon," answered Joe. "A railroad officer ordered us off, just as we started over the Arrow Creek trestle. It seems we didn't move quick enough to suit him. We were on top of a box car. He pulled his gun and fired. The bullet struck him—Dad—and he tumbled off into the water below."

"Clear from the top of the box car?" exclaimed the doctor.

"Yes."

"But how about yourself? Did he shoot at you?"

"He would have. But I dived."

"Dived! Down into the creek, too?"

Hinkle's eyes fell on Reilly's wet garments.

"Yes. After Dad. He was helpless."

"How did you get him here?"

"I carried him."

"Over a mile," said the doctor.

He looked down at the old man's motionless body for a moment.

"I'm sorry," he said quietly. "Your labor has been in vain. Your friend is dead!"

Joe Reilly bent his head. His thoughts were very bitter. Old Dad had passed, struck down at the very threshold of his anticipated haven. The thing was too monstrous! His fists clenched tight; his pulses pounded at his temples; his nostrils stung.

He stepped forward and touched his old friend's forehead. His hand brushed the damp gray locks.

"Poor old Dad!" he murmured.

A little time he stood there. Then he looked around into the faces of the silent men who stood near him.

"Gentlemen," he said, "do any of you know Lem Carlett, who has a mining claim somewhere out on Arrow Creek?"

A chorus of assents rose from them.

"We all know him," said Doctor Hinkle. "His place is about seven miles from here."

"Then," said Joe, "will you try to get word to him?"

He looked down at Dad again, his heart heavy with thought of what this would mean to the man on Arrow Creek.

"This man is his brother," he ended.

IT WAS Friday morning when Joe Reilly reached Logan City, division headquarters of the I. & O. He looked at the directory board at the foot of the stairs in the depot building and saw that Superintendent Huestler was located at Number 207, second floor. He went there, opened the door and entered.

There was but one man in the office. He sat at a flat-topped desk, bent over some correspondence.

"Superintendent Huestler?" asked Reilly directly.

The precise-looking man at the desk glanced up, nodding briefly.

"Will you be in all day, sir?" went on Joe evenly.

The superintendent looked a little surprized.

"May I ask just why you want to know that?" he said.

"It is important," stated Joe equivocally. "I'm expecting to see you later; it's essential that I know if you'll be here."

"Well," said Huestler slowly, as if debating, "I expect to be"—he nodded—"most likely all day."

"Thank you," said Joe and went out.

He descended the stairs and went into the big main waiting-room of the busy depot. He strolled about the waiting-room, then into the men's smoking-room, casting sharp scrutinizing glances around as he went, as if searching for some one.

From the smoking-room he moved to the train-shed, peeping into the baggage and express rooms and into all the nooks and crannies he could discern. This round of procedure he kept up the rest of the morning—quietly, unobtrusively, asking no questions, and bothering no one.

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Noon came and he dropped into the station restaurant. He ate but a bite, then was out again, searching, moving about.

One o'clock came, two o'clock, three, and then just as the hands of the big depot clock pointed to three-thirty he saw the man he sought.

In through the train-shed from the direction of the yards walked a solid, square-faced, thin-lipped man. Reilly moved forward and just opposite the main depot entrance intercepted him.

"Smeed!" said Joe, stepping up beside the man.

The railroad officer half-turned alertly. They stood eye to eye. But there was no recognition in Smeed's expression, Reilly was pleased to note. He had hoped that his present appearance with his neatly pressed apparel and clean-shaved face would be enough different from the somewhat unkempt, grimy figure Smeed had briefly seen on the box car to baffle the officer's sense of identification.

Joe's right hand rested easily in his outside coat pocket.

"If you move or try to give an alarm I'll kill you!" he said quietly. "I've a gun in my right hand and it has you covered. Understand?"

Smeed looked closely into the eyes of the young man who so threatened him. He saw there nothing but a cold, impenetrable resolve.

"And who the —— are you?" he said, bluffing.

"You'll place me pretty soon," said Joe. "Now then, march! We're going up to Superintendent Huestler's office. You first, and without a word. You'll drop the very instant you squeak!"

A half-second Smeed delayed, as if considering the chances of a refusal. Then abruptly he turned and entered the depot.

They ascended the stairway, Smeed first, Reilly a step in the rear—and so they came to Superintendent Huestler's door.

"Open it," commanded Joe.

SMEED did as ordered and they both stepped into the office. Joe perceived with satisfaction that, as before, Superintendent Huestler sat alone. As he pushed the door shut Reilly turned the key and dropped it in his pocket; and before the astonished superintendent could speak or make a move to prevent him, he had walked over and performed the same act at an inner door that opened from the office into some connecting room.

"I want to say, right here at the first, that I'm perfectly sane," said Joe then.

He took his right hand from his coat pocket and revealed the flat automatic pistol that he held. He kept it leveled at Smeed.

"What is this!" ejaculated Huestler, partly rising from his chair. "What does it mean?"

He stared at Reilly, at Smeed, then back to the man with the pistol.

"It means," said Joe, "an accounting for the Killer."

He flirted the gun that covered the officer.

"Raise your hands, Smeed! Higher. Hold them there."

Quickly stepping over, Reilly ran his free hand through Smeed's clothing. He brought forth a pistol, much like his own. This he deposited in his hip pocket.

Stepping back a few paces, Joe indicated a chair.

"You can take that chair, Smeed, the one to the side of the superintendent's desk. And if you'll sit down, Mr. Huestler, I'll take his one."

He selected a chair from several along the wall and placed it near the center of the floor.

So there were the three of them: Huestler seated at his desk; Smeed seated two paces to Huestler's left; and Joe Reilly, weapon in hand, facing both from about three steps' distance from the near side of the superintendent's desk.

"I'll have to ask you, Mr. Huestler, to make no attempt to send out any sort of a warning—to summon help. If you do," said Joe, "I'll shoot—not you, but Smeed."

The usually rather cold face of the superintendent betrayed no emotion other than that of astonishment.

"This is all very amazing," he said sharply. "I do not understand it at all. Have you some quarrel with Officer Smeed?"

"I have a matter to adjust with him," replied Reilly quietly. "A serious matter. That adjustment must be made here and now. I brought him to your office that I might lay it before you."

The superintendent was silent for a little space. He stroked his chin, eyes bent keenly on Reilly. Then he inclined his head.

"Very well," he said. "Let us hear it."

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"You see," said Joe, still in the same even, unhurried voice that he had used from the first, "last Tuesday this Smeed killed a friend of mine. Shot him dead!"

Simultaneous ejaculations came from Huestler and Smeed. Both jerked rigid in their chairs, as if an electric shock had flown about the room.

"You recall me now, Smeed," said Joe, looking squarely at him. "Yes, I'm the other man who was on top the box car, at Arrow Creek trestle."

A certain bravado had up to this time been apparent in the officer's poise. But now as he stared into the level, ice-cold eyes of the man who accused him, the air of bravado dropped. Something like a shiver ran through Smeed's stolid frame. He wilted back in his chair.

"I want you to look at him," said Reilly to the superintendent. "Look at him and you can see for yourself if I am speaking truth."

Huestler looked. Unconsciously his head nodded in confirmation. He turned again to Reilly.

"But why?" he asked.

"Why?" said Joe. "Because he's a beast! A yellow-souled creature who took delight in shooting down a defenseless old man—a gentle, fine old man who couldn't have harmed any one, and whose only fault was that he was poor!"

The words were like the lashes of a rawhide whip.

Huestler was gripping the arms of his chair.

"Where?" he said. "How did it come about?"

"We were coming west last Tuesday afternoon," explained Joe. "Old Dad Carlett and I—on one of your freight-trains. We'd been traveling together for over a week. Yes, on freights. I was on my way to see about a job in Spokane, and old Dad was seeking to join his brother at Monitor."

Joe paused a moment, then resumed.

"I must make it clear to you about old Dad and his brother—both in the sixties. Both, it seems, had been lifelong wanderers: Dad, over the face of the earth—an unsung philosopher, observant, and perfectly harmless; Lem, the brother, a prospector in the hills. And now Lem had at last made a fair little strike. He'd written Dad to join him. Together they were to work the claim. 'To settle down,' he'd written; to work and hunt and fish and moralize; to end their days together."

Again Joe paused. Huestler was all attention.

"Yes," urged the superintendent. "Go on."

"So here Dad had come, to join his brother. And because he had practically no money he journeyed on freights. Our extra was on the siding just east of the Arrow Creek bridge when an east-bound extra passed us. Dad saw Smeed in the passing caboose. He jerked me down inside the gondola we were in and told me about Smeed—and his reputation as a killer. Did you ever hear that, Mr. Huestler? About Smeed, I mean?"

THE superintendent stirred uneasily.

"I've heard—there have been reports," he said with some discomposure. "But it's always been shown it was in the line of duty."

"In the line of duty!" repeated Joe, for the first time revealing a hint of bitterness in his voice. "Yes, it would be that. 'In the line of duty' can cover a multitude of crimes."

His unyielding eyes lay hard on the voiceless Smeed.

"But anyway," he went on, "we pulled out of the siding and started over the trestle. Dad had climbed to the top of the box car just ahead of our gondola and I was following when we heard Smeed shout:

" 'Climb off, you ——! Climb off, quick!'

"Smeed had seen us from the caboose and had slipped from his train to ours. And when he shouted our car, you understand, was right on the narrow trestle where it was impossible to alight without dropping into Arrow Creek.

" 'Why don't you hit the cinders!' Smeed then cried—knowing it was an impossibility there.

"Old Dad answered, 'Just as soon as we get across,' in a friendly sort of way and started to move toward the ladder.

" 'No, by ——!' Smeed cried. 'You'll get off right now!'

"And with that, sir, he shot old Dad!"

"Shot him!" cried Huestler. "Like that?"

"Like that," affirmed Joe grimly. "And then Dad fell over the edge of the box car roof—down into the water below. I dived in after him, got him to shore and carried

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him to the doctor at Monitor. But it did no good. Old Dad was dead; shot through the breast."

Silence fell in the office; a silence so deep that the ticking of the office clock on the wall sounded like the taps of a tack-hammer. Smeed was slumped on his chair, the superintendent gazing at him with a sort of horror. Reilly, somber and quiet, regarded them both.

"Tell him," said Joe, finally breaking the stillness and speaking to Smeed. "Is what I've just said right?"

Smeed stirred; but no sound came from him.

"Tell him," said Joe again.

His words were no louder than before but something in them seemed to stop Huestler's breath.

Smeed's lips moved this time, but still no sound came from them. Then desperately his head nodded in the affirmative.

"You see," said Joe to Huestler, "he admits it. That's why I brought him here. This thing must be settled."

"And how is that to be?" asked Huestler.

He ran his finger around inside his collar as if it had been choking him.

"I want you to discharge Smeed from the service of the I. & O.," answered Reilly. "Then I want you to give me a statement, signed, that you dismissed him because without just cause he shot and killed Dad Carlett."

"But if I did that," said the perplexed superintendent, "it would amount to the conviction of Smeed."

"Exactly," agreed Reilly. "That's what he ought to be—convicted."

"But in a way perhaps he shouldn't be held for it. This man, your friend Carlett, was a trespasser; he was stealing a ride."

"Exactly," said Joe again. "Dad was doing what I and a hundred thousand other men are doing daily. A trespasser on a freight-train. A horrible crime, truly! There's a penalty for it; but is that penalty death?"

"Death!" said Huestler.

He shook his head.

"No, not that!"

"That's what it cost Dad," said Joe steadily.

His voice rose in the slightest degree.

"Do you think it was 'in the line of duty' that Smeed killed him? It was utterly uncalled for, utterly unjustifiable! There is no law in the land that makes it legal for a man to do a thing like that. Dad was not resisting. And if there is no law that makes his killing legal, then what is it? It's murder! And Smeed, there, is his murderer!"

Huestler seemed bewildered, nervously tapping his chair.

"Then—then why not let Smeed stand trial?" he said. "In the courts."

Reilly made a patient gesture with his hand.

"Don't you understand?" he said. "That's why I came here. As it stands now a court trial would be hopeless. Smeed would say 'in the line of duty.' You know how easy they fix those things up. The only witness against him would be myself; and I'd be discredited before I'd start—being a trespasser, too. You can see that.

"It's the abruptness, the unexpectedness of my bringing him here and accusing him today that's made Smeed betray his guilt. He wasn't prepared. But if it came to a court trial he'd be prepared. His case would be all oiled and trimmed. He'd get off."

"And what would you do if I signed the statement?"

"With that I could feel sure that he would at least get sent up for a few years. It'd be a barricade to his escape that he couldn't pass.

"But," continued Reilly, "even that wouldn't be enough. That would not even begin to balance the count."

"Not enough!" said Huestler. "What—what else?"

"What else?" said Joe. "Why, I must lay my two hands on him! With my two fists, right here in this office, I want to split those thin lips of his, to batter shut his snake-eyes, to break his devil's nose! He murdered a helpless old man, and I wish you had seen the savage, beastly gleam of his face as he did it. I'm going to hammer that face into a whimpering, bleeding bundle of flesh and bones!"

THERE was nothing oratorical in Reilly's manner. Nothing but implacable, deadly purpose. Huestler's fingers ached, he had been gripping them so tightly. Smeed was dumb, drooping on his chair like a sodden rag.

"But—but what if I refuse to sign?" gasped Huestler. "I can't—I can't allow you to do that!"

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"Ah, but you will sign," said Joe, speaking with calm, level precision. "You will, I feel sure."

"What makes you feel sure?"

Huestler was bent forward across his desk now, as if drawn by some magnet. He had a conviction that Smeed's accuser knew whereof he spoke; he had a feeling that he was about to hear something that would chill his heart anew.

"Because," said Reilly, "if you don't sign I'll kill Smeed!"

The hand that held the pistol moved slightly.

"Here," he added. "Before I leave."

An exclamation came into Huestler's throat, but it ended in something like a sob. He leaned even farther over his desk, eyes wide.

Smeed also had been shocked into movement and he was now, like Huestler, leaning forward, eyes staring, filled with gripping fear. A guttural sort of sound came from his lips.

"You wouldn't—" breathed Huestler. "You wouldn't do that!"

"I would," said Joe.

And Huestler, and Smeed, knew that he would. There was more unbending, unswerving resolution in that quiet voice than all the bluster in the world could have held. There would be no turning aside.

Grimly the specter of death stood before them in that still room. There was a choice to be made. Huestler saw which he would make.

The silence was abruptly broken by footsteps on the other side of the inner door. The handle rattled; then there came a knock and some one calling the superintendent's name. Huestler's eyes sought Reilly.

"Tell him to go away—you're busy," directed Joe.

"I can't be interrupted now!" called Huestler.

Whereupon the person beyond the door moved off; the footsteps died away.

"Which?" said Joe.

"I'll sign," said Huestler.

Reilly rose from his chair.

"We'll settle the other part first," he said. "Will you give me your word you'll be absolutely neutral—that you'll make no move to help either of us?"

Huestler was past all debate or opposition.

"I will," he said.

Joe dropped his pistol back in his coat pocket, stripped off the garment and placed it on a chair along the wall.

"Stand up, Smeed!" he ordered.

The officer, licking his dry lips, got heavily to his feet.

"Off with your coat!" directed Joe.

At last Smeed appeared to find his tongue, to wake from his daze.

"But you've still got my gun—in your hip pocket," he demurred thickly. "You—you're liable to pull it."

Reilly looked steadily at him.

"Crooked deeds, crooked thoughts," he said.

"But there," he continued, tossing Smeed's pistol on the chair with his coat, "I'll do that if it'll make you fight any better."

Slowly Smeed peeled off his coat while Joe pushed the chair he had sat on clear of the center of the floor. They faced each other: Joe, young and tall and lean; Smeed, a few years older, solid and bull-necked, with the shoulders of an ox.

"Come on, now," urged Joe. "Here is your chance. If you can beat me up enough you'll be able to get out—to get away. Time!"

HIS right fist shot out and smacked Smeed's heavy cheek. The blow stung and seemed to jolt Smeed to full activity. His eyes gleamed with sudden realization of what Joe's last words had meant. If he could subdue the man before him he could make a break for outside, make his getaway; if he couldn't he was already as good as behind the bars. With a sort of snarl he stepped in and swung.

Smeed's blow was like the drive of a mighty ram. But Reilly lightly swept it aside.

"You'll fight, then!" said Joe. "That's good!"

He feinted with his left, then drove his right hard and full upon Smeed's mouth. A gush of blood came down over the officer's chin.

"The lips!" said Joe. "I said I'd split them!"

He turned away another of Smeed's drives, then mercilessly sent another swing against the bleeding mouth. With something like a groan Smeed fell back a step.

"The nose!" said Joe. "Watch the nose. It's next."

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Easily he sidestepped a mad rush and remorselessly bored in again.

A sledge-hammer blow swept past his ear. With his left to the jaw he turned Smeed's head, then lashed a powerful right to the nose. There was a sharp "Sput!" as the blow landed and the crimson flowed down Smeed's front and on to the linoleum-covered floor.

"There's for the nose," said Joe. "The eyes yet!"

In quick succession he planted both fists to Smeed's left eye. It puffed up like a mushroom. Another blow closed it.

"One!' said Joe.

Backing away, he glimpsed Huestler standing over his desk, pale, hypnotized by the battle. Then he looked away to avoid another rush.

Half-crazed, his one eye useless, Smeed came in, his big arms flying without apparent direction—as if he were to bear his opponent down by sheer force. Like heavy mauls his fists pounded upon Reilly's forearms. Joe went to sidestep quickly—his foot slipped in a small pool of Smeed's blood. One of the big man's powerful drives caught him on the shoulder at the same instant, and down he went.

Joe was not hurt, and as he fell he clutched at a chair to keep from going completely down. The chair he caught at was the one on which he had placed his coat and Smeed's pistol. His hold was ineffectual, for he only succeeded in overturning chair and all as he went back.

As the chair went over Smeed's gun bounced down and slid across the floor. With a roar of triumph the officer sprang for it. Like a flash he had picked it up and fired.

Joe was just starting to scramble to his feet. Smeed's first shot was hurried and it missed. Before he could fire another Joe, still on his knees, had snatched up the chair and thrown it at him. Then he made a dive for his coat where it lay on the floor.

"My ——!" he heard Huestler shout at Smeed. "Stop it! Stop it!"

Smeed had dodged the flying chair, but it served momentarily to spoil his next shot. And by the time he had recovered his balance and brought his gun around again Joe's hand was in the pocket of his coat.

The two shots came together—Joe firing through the pocket.

Something brushed his check; and then he saw Smeed fall.

BY THAT time hands were pounding at both office doors; voices were shouting. Joe got up, stepped forward and looked down at the fallen Smeed. Like a man in a trance Huestler crept around his desk and joined him.

Smeed never moved. A little round hole, squarely in the middle of his forehead, told why.

"Dead!" Joe heard Huestler whisper. "Dead!"

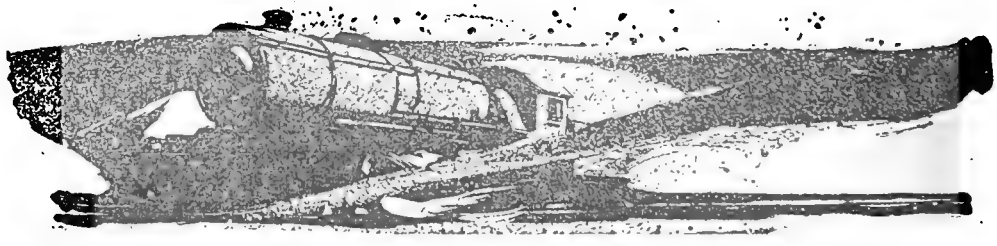
"Yes," said Reilly.

He had no regrets. He could not have done otherwise, he knew. And in his heart he knew that old Dad's score was now wiped clear.

Silently Joe got the two keys and handed them to Huestler. The situation was reversed. He now was at Huestler's mercy. What the superintendent would say when he opened the doors to those clamoring outside would mean freedom or detention, possibly life or death, to him. But he made no plea, surrendering the keys without a word.

The superintendent moved over, unlocked the inner door and swung it open. A swarm of clerks and office assistants crowded in. Their exclamations ceased as they beheld the motionless body on the floor. Open-mouthed, they looked at the superintendent and Reilly.

"It's Smeed!" said Huestler hoarsely. "This man—" he pointed at Joe Reilly—"shot him in self-defense."



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THE ANTI-HUSTLER

by F. ST. MARS

Author of "Union is Strength," "Bos, of the Herd," etc.

TO BE "all upside down," as the saying goes, is a state of domestic disruption we all hate, but to live upside down, to eat, drink, sleep, quarrel, court, be born, die upside down—! Whew!

But that was not all.

Ai, citizen of the primeval forest, had other troubles. He could not walk with any sense, because his feet were not feet, but fixed claw hooks, so that he could only shuffle on the sides thereof while on the ground. More, his little, lusterless eyes were red, and may have been half blind for all I know. They looked it. More still, he appeared earless, because the same were so small, and buried in fur so as to seem of little use to anybody; and he had a stump tail! Lastly, but by no means leastly, he was S-L-O-W, so slow that *moss grew upon him!*

Yes, verily, moss! You could see it, a tiny green alga rooted upon the peculiar fluting of his long, coarse, brittle fur. It made him look green, he being brownish really; though even looking greener than one imagines he could be, had its uses in that world's biggest land of biggest trees, since, in conjunction with his slowness, it often got him overlooked as some sort of vegetable.

Add unto these things an oblong maned head and a thick neck, white face, short and flat, and black "goggles," and you have him—Ai, the sloth.

Ai went for a walk in the eternal shade of the immemorial forest. The evening chorus was on—howling monkey versus nightjar, cicada versus tree frogs, and insect hum versus the lot.

Ai walked upon the biggest roof garden in the globe, the immense, trackless, unbroken overworld of the primeval forest roof. He was walking quite smartly for him, that is to say, so slowly you did not see him. He looked like a biggish wood knot.

He slowly put out one foreleg, hitched its three fixed hooks of claws over a creeper, tested it, then as slowly let go of his last perch with his off hind-claw, and so on. Apparently watching his step with him was not a joke merely; it was an obsession. One judged that he had forgotten more about how not to fall than any monkey ever learned. And that was his traveling gait.

Thus he—walked, and swung and hung noiseless, and, to judge by appearances, almost lifeless, till a big, red, maned old bully of a howling monkey, with much commotion and swaying of branches, came trapezing and leaping along to feed upon the very fruit of the precise cecropia-tree Ai was feeding upon.

All movement, so called, promptly left Ai, as the boss hooligan of the forest went by, so close as nearly to touch him.

The howler swung once, swung twice just under the sloth's nose, then let himself go, and landed more gracefully than any acrobat

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upon a giant liana, otherwise bush-rope, otherwise huge creeper of many colors, and as thick as a man's thigh, ten feet away. I say he landed upon a "liana" because he thought it was a liana, and it looked as if it were a liana. Then he thought otherwise.

The thing began to move.

It took a kink unto itself, this giant creeper, and—it hissed a hiss, vile and malevolent that filled the brooding dark. That creeper was an anaconda, the world's biggest snake!

The red howler came back at the sloth like a boomerang, missed his hold on the branch—and very rarely monkeys do that—actually compromised by clutching Ai, got a tear with one of that citizen's meat-hook claws for pains, and dropped plumb—fell headlong into the black well of the dark below. Twenty feet down he clutched an aerial root, swung, caught another, and vanished into the foliage, a perfect acrobat.

BUT Ai was too busy—doing nothing—to trouble about the aerial gymnastics of one red howler more or less. The anaconda—whose cousins are the python and the boa constrictor—had struck a pile-driver blow at the red hooligan with her horrible cold blunt nose that whizzed past Ai's invisible ear like a six-inch shell, and, since the monk was not there, landed one third of her mammoth length across the branch to which the sloth was hooked as immovable as the knot he pretended to be.

Now a serpent as much over twenty feet long as you like to guess is no featherweight. The branch snapped, swayed, fell and hung by a splinter.

This was nothing to the anaconda. She had her tail round a firm hold back behind, of course; and she merely hung, swinging.

So did Ai—who had never budged a fraction—hang swinging, glued to the hanging swinging branch—till the branch finally fell clear. Then Ai let go!

It was not a great fall—only a matter of some sixty or seventy feet. Usually he was among the higher trees some hundred and fifty to two hundred feet aloft. But it looked an awful tumble, all the same.

Down, down, down in one long sickening dive hurtled Ai, in a ball, and hit the ground beneath with a thud that seemed certainly to indicate the end of him, as it would any other beast in fact. Nor did he move after striking. The greenish brown huddled figure remained motionless, silent, inert—almost exactly like a fallen orchid-root.

Just where he had landed, a sounder of peccaries, those little wild forest pigs, were rooting for seeds. They scattered with grunts upon his arrival. They lost every year several of their members through falling nuts, you see. But as he did not move, they soon came back. All the same, they might have ripped him to pieces had they known who he was.

The peccaries turned out to be rather useful in the end, however, for an ocelot, the dwarfed leopard of those parts, who had been stalking Ai for the past hour—though invisible, of course—came cautiously climbing down, cat fashion, to see if he could put Ai out of his pain in his own peculiar way—and make a meal of him afterward. He did not see the little peccaries till he was upon the ground, and then they chased him, gnashing, and foaming with their little razor-sharp tusks at his whirling tail, up to another tree much faster than he had come down.

At last the little pigs ambled away, and the forest was left to moon-percolated darkness, and damp silence, broken only by the ceaseless hum of insects, and the leathery whisper of ghostly vampire bats' wings.

Then it was that Ai woke up. How long he had been "playing possum" because of his foes, or how long really stunned, were impossible to say. He hoisted himself to his hooks—one cannot say his feet—slowly enough for a crippled beast, but then he always moved like that.

Perhaps what moved him in the end really was the sound of waters. He was never far from water, for he loved the flooded forest, where, possibly, many ground foes that could climb found it harder to interview him.

But the sound of these waters was different. There was an ominous mutter about them that spelt "Big Flood." As a matter of fact, the river close by had risen six feet suddenly at the behest of eight inches of rain falling in one day among the hills where it came from.

NOW there was plenty of time for any beast to get away, to climb a tree, or to run—any ordinary beast, that is. But Ai was not any ordinary beast.

And he run?

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Why as he stood up even, one might see that he had to turn his feet over like a cripple—the result of "hanging about so long," as one observer puts it.

And Ai hurry?

Well, he did get as far as lifting one foreleg very deliberately in the process of making one stride forward—mind, there were trees all about him—but sat down in the middle of it to feel about blindly in the air as if he could not see, and took it for granted there must be some vegetation within reach. So there was not.

And in that absurd position the flood caught him—caught and carried, and shouldered him away into the gloom and the womb of night toward a bend in the river, carried him, still sitting up, and waving his arms idiotically like a speaker "shouldered" by an unruly crowd.

Luckily, if rather surprizingly, Ai could swim, even if he could not win a Marathon, and he did not drown now, though the flood was too strong, or he too slow, to let him go where he wanted to, and he finally fetched up alive upon a small island in the middle of the river, which was itself half flooded out.

Why Ai had not been killed by the fall was simply and solely because he was a sloth. Any other beast would have been—pulped.

Still it very soon began to look as if he might just as well have been killed, for after two hours' exploration of the few yards left of the island above water at his usual exasperating speed, he found only one tree and that dead. However, it was with him a case of any tree in a storm; he must hang somewhere, so up he went, tucked his head between his legs, hooked on with all four claw paws, and—went to sleep.

I may be permitted to emphasize these words, "went to sleep," because when the gray still dawn came he was still high aloft, asleep like a knot against the knotty trunk, and at lugubrious dusk he had not moved, and throughout the night he remained. Indeed though he did wander around a little, a very little, in the interval, it became the case that any hour during the next *three weeks* you could have stood upon the river-bank opposite and looked across to the speck of an island with its one leafless tree, and seen that "knot," still, silent, inanimate, apparently dead.

At the end of that time, the river shrank, a drought came on, the channels shriveled, and Ai swam back to the forest, and the family party of which he was leader still in the same cecropia-tree where he had left them. But the extraordinary point was—not a morsel of food, fruit, leaves, or shoots, had passed Ai's mouth during the whole of the time of his absence. And— Why did he not starve? Oh, because he was a sloth, I suppose, which, if you had known him, you would admit is as good an answer as one can get.

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LOST DIGGINGS

A Five-Part Story. Part II

By HUGH PENDEXTER

Author of "The Road to El Dorado," "A Scout for Virginia," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

WHEN Shoshoni Hale, carrying a rifle and two hand-guns, came into the Boise Basin on the trail of his stolen mare he ran into one thing after another. The first was "Old Idaho," who was reported to have found the famous Lost Diggings, and who met him with no hospitality.

"Don't hanker to have no strange men around my granddarter," said the mountain-man, but Hale stayed long enough at the little cabin to meet Harriet Prescott, who looked like a boy in her buckskin clothes, before he went on down to Boise City.

A gold-mad town was Boise City, Idaho Territory, in this Summer of 'Sixty-five, and a town in which the ordinary processes of justice were reversed, for the power of the law was in the hands of evil men. Shoshoni learned this when he found his horse stalled in a livery stable as the property of Ferd Patterson, gambler, and went to court to try to get the mare back.

After a farcical examination Judge Curks was about to deny all his claims, apparently, when a small, dapper man appeared and said in a shrill voice—

"Just a minute, please."

Judge Curks squirmed and muttered—

"Always glad to hear from Ben Riply."

Ben Riply, of the Payette Committee, symbolized the silent justice that struck without warning, that left its mark—"XXX"—placarded on more than one dangling victim, and that would not hesitate to apply its corrective methods to those in high places. He got Shoshoni his horse and advised him to leave town.

Shoshoni needed no such advice. In the rear of the court-room he had seen a bearded face raised above the crowd and a hand pressed against the right cheek and shoved sharply upward. He broke into a cold sweat of fear.

From the town in which he had made enemies of Ferd Patterson and his gang Shoshoni Hale headed directly for Idaho City, where he had two friends, Jack Gorman and ex-Sheriff Pinkham. As he rode along he heard a hoarse voice—

"Hands up."

It was the Jem Helm gang, looking for Lucky Tom, a miner who had thrown Boise City into great excitement, and had almost got himself lynched, by refusing to tell the location of rich diggings he had discovered. Hale had helped him escape.

After taking his pouch of dust the Helm gang let Shoshoni go, and he rode on, to run into Lucky Tom himself.

"You're welcome as whisky," said the old prospector, and they made camp together.

Next morning two mysterious shots from the bushes killed Lucky Tom. Before he died he signed over his claim to Hale.

"Man! Man!" sobbed Shoshoni. "I brought death to you. They took you for me."

CHAPTER IV

A TRICK FOR PATTERSON

FOR three years men had passed through Idaho City in pursuit of gold and silver, and each new discovery threw the Territory into a fresh frenzy. Memory had to go back only two years when a cabin site on Moore's Creek proved to be worth three hundred thousand dollars. From the very beginning of placer mining on Grime's Creek eighty dollars to a pan was not uncommon, and bushels of gold were picked up from the gravel of Bannack, as Idaho City was called until the Spring of 'Sixty-four.

From the first influx of prospectors to the country one golden sensation after another

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had keyed the public mind to a fever pitch. If there were a lull in the Snake River basin then the Beaver Head country on the headwaters of the Jefferson fork of the Missouri called over the mountains for all to come to the enormously rich diggings. Virginia City, contemporaneous with the Boise basin towns, boasted of boatloads of gold going down to Fort Benton and thence to Home.

But the country west of the Bitter Root range easily held its own as a magnet, and if men swarmed east to the Beaver Head diggings, so, also, did men frantically hasten west as the gold quartz mines and silver bearing ledges began to be uncovered. With ten to a dozen pack-trains arriving daily at the Boise mines, with endless freight-trains bringing from twenty-five hundred to five thousand pounds of supplies to a wagon, with a wagon full of cats bringing ten dollars apiece for the felines while an equal number of chicks vanished at five dollars each, with the Ida Elmore yielding two hundred and seventy dollars a ton, the Snake country had no cause to be jealous of the region afterward set off as the territory of Montana.

And what a galaxy of names for a quartz miner to worship! What a world of romance and tragedy associated with each! There was the Barker and Eastern, the Ophir and Idaho. There was the Independence, the Southern Confederacy, and the Esmeralda. There was the General Lane, the Western Star, the Golden Star, Mandocino, the Abe Lincoln, the Emmet and Hibernia. In the list was mirrored the travail and glory of history in the making.

The Pioneer on Granite Creek assayed from six thousand to twenty thousand dollars a ton for the best rock, while the Gambrinus, although short lived, was tremendously rich, and men were near to insanity when they babbled about pieces of fallen rock glittering with gold. With all this profusion of yellow treasure it might be expected that the public mind would be proof against the lure of a baser metal. Then came the discovery on Jordan creek in the Owyhee district of wonderful silver ledges, and the land once more was topsy-turvy in a mad scramble to profit by the new offerings.

Thus for three years Idaho City, in common with its neighbors, had lived only on the peaks of excitement. And now the town seethed with the most unique sensation of all, unique because it had never been dreamed of.

It was said that diamonds were to be had for the taking. Governor Lyon, erratic and unwise, if not unbalanced, had made the discovery; and what was more remarkable he was in New York City at the time. This seeming geographical impossibility vanishes when it is added that the governor's discovery was vicarious. The men and women of early Idaho were so used to the uncovering of wonderful riches that when the governor returned from the East, and his "discovery" made there became talked about, the presence of the precious stones was accepted as but another illustration of the region's prodigality.

The town was too busy in listening to and in repeating each wild rumor to give much heed to newcomers. Hale left his mare and rifle in a stable and walked forth to find his friends. It was his first visit to the town since the fire. He found Main and Wall Streets compactly rebuilt, although the fire was a scant three months old. These thoroughfares were filled with eager, nervous men and a considerable number of women. Marion and Montgomery Streets, running for half a mile parallel to Elk creek, presented a similar degree of activity. He did not venture into the rest of the town which lay scattered over the rising ground behind Elk and Moore Creeks. There were between eight and ten thousand human beings helping to make things hum when Hale added his tall figure to the busy throngs.

Three newspapers took time off from an acrid war against Oregon's alleged endeavors to control the Territory's trade to fan high the flames of expectancy by faithfully advertising each new discovery, rumored or actual. Some three hundred places of business helped the miner to spend his gold. Stores were filled to the doors from morning until closing time, and, as in Boise City, gambling saloons could scarcely accommodate their customers. For those seeking less hectic entertainment three theaters catered nightly.

Failing to locate by wandering the streets either Sumner Pinkham, the former sheriff, or Jack Gorman, Hale decided to take up some central position and wait for the stream of passing humanity to bring them to him. He dropped into a saloon and took a seat in a corner and after ordering a drink proceeded to make some plans. Any

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moment might precipitate a crisis in his affairs. He was counting much on the advice of Pinkham, a shrewd, nerve-proof son of Maine. Failing in that he purposed seeking counsel from Gorman, a younger and more fiery fellow, but a staunch friend and one well thought of in the town because of his promptness in quelling the bread riot just before the big fire.

A man rushed through the door and up to the bar and loudly proclaimed—

"Lyon has been here and has sneaked off to the hills to pick up the diamonds!"

"Drink down and shut up! Lyon's in town now," some one answered the newcomer.

"Mebbe; but he wouldn'ta come back here if it wa'n't for the diamonds. A —— of a governor Washington sends us!"

"That's a true word!" bellowed a red-faced stage-driver. "Down in Boise City they're saying that out of seventy thousand dollars sent Lyon for the Nez Perces only twenty thousand dollars can be accounted for."

"Curse the Injuns! Twenty thousand is too much for 'em. We're interested in diamonds. Who's seen any?" yelled an inebriated miner.

"I have," spoke up a black-hatted, white-shirted and exquisitely booted specimen of the gambling tribe. "And I know diamonds. The one I saw is genuine. I don't know where it came from, and if I did I wouldn't tell. The fellow swore it's an Idaho stone."

The proprietor of the place paused in his promenade down the inside of the long bar and told the gambler:

"D. H. Fogus come up from Owyhee and gave Lyon a five-hundred dollar bar of silver for one small stone. It's said that they're going to work together. Lyon got onto the whole business by meeting a fellow named Davis in New York. Davis had a lot of small diamonds he'd picked up down Owyhee way. He took Lyon along with him when he sold one for a thousand dollars."

"A small stone fetch a thousand?" gasped the stage-driver. "By godfrey! I'm through with the ribbons! I go back to Jordan Crick a passenger on the first coach for Ruby City. A thousand dollars for a small stone! Say, partner, what might be the size of such a stone?" The last to the gambler.

The gambler extended a hand and touched one of several small stones set in a circlet ring and explained:

"I gave fifteen hundred for each of those stones in Frisco. Allowing for high prices on the coast and in this town, I'd say about that size."

He was instantly surrounded by an eager, pawing crowd. He held out his hand patiently until they had taken turns in looking at the gem. One man voiced the doubt of all by deploring:

"But how's a body to know when he's found di'mon's? They're so danged small! Any little bit of a shiny pebble might be a little di'mon'."

"And worth a thousand dollars!" exploded the stage-driver.

"The best way's to find a likely-looking location and rake all the small stuff into boxes and barrels and then sort it over at night when a candle will make 'em shine," one man solemnly suggested.

This was voted to be a most excellent idea, and a long row of men insisted on buying a round of drinks in honor of the suggestion. The gambler smiled cynically and reminded—

"The governor's the only one to know where to look."

"Then we'll trail him!" vowed the stage-driver.

The proprietor toyed with a small drink and confidentially told the whole room—

"Fogus as much as let out to me that diamonds can be found right near this town as well as in the Owyhee district."

"That's why Lyon is back here instead of down in Owyhee."

"They can be found in one part of Idaho as well as in another," the stage-driver optimistically declared.

"This is quite a sizable chunk of country," said the gambler quietly, as he turned to depart. "Gentlemen, I am too fond of the night to spend my waking hours in hunting sparklers. I'm going to bed now so's to be fresh for the evening. But if you want to find diamonds you want to keep watch of Lyon and Fogus. Once they lead you to the diggings you can all rush in and help yourselves. And the best luck to you all and may you come back here and drop some of your hauls at my table."

This sentiment was loudly cheered. Hale pushed back his chair and was on the point of following the gambler's example when his friend Pinkham entered by the backdoor.

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He halted to gaze over the excited crowd and caught Hale's gesture and joined him. After shaking hands warmly Pinkham said:

"Got your guns on, eh? Good. Got wind you was in town half an hour ago. Follow me out the back door and into Pitts's store-room up the street. If we meet Ferd Patterson be ready to drop him. He's after you. It was his yelping that told me you was here. Heard him brag to some friends at the Gold Dust Saloon that you'd arrived and was his meat."

Without a word Hale rose and followed his friend to the door. Pinkham emerged first and glanced up and down the street and motioned for Hale to join him.

"You go ahead and be ready for business. I'll bring up the rear and watch out," he said.

Hale strode off and the two reached the rear end of the Heffron and Pitts store without any opposition. The former sheriff led the way into a shed used as a store-room and seated himself on a box facing the door and motioned to Hale to sit at his side. Then he demanded—

"What's up between you and Patterson?"

Hale, close-lipped, related his experience in Boise City, and as he talked his gaze never left the open door and his hands never left his hips.

"Updyke is behind this," said Pinkham when Hale finished. "He and his gang are worse than Jem Helm. Not satisfied with robbing you of two hundred dollars through that rascal Curks they're out to get you. Patterson just come in and told his crowd that he saw you on the street, that he was afraid of you, that you had threatened to kill him on sight, that he would protect his life and begin firing the first time he saw you. That establishes his alibi of self-defense."

"Did he come horseback, or on the coach?"

"Coach. Sydney Bill was with him."

"Don't know him even by sight."

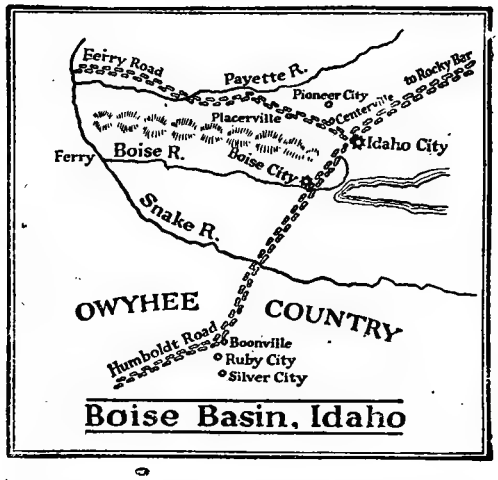
"You haven't missed much."

"Where can I find Patterson?"

"You get your mare and clear out. If he kills you—and he'll take every advantage—he's got it fixed with Bowen, the sheriff, to go scot free. If you kill him they'll swing you. I'm your friend and I say for you to light out. There'll be other chances for you to meet up with Patterson."

Hale was silent for a minute, then bitterly surrendered.

"All right. Your medicine is good. I'll go. But it isn't Patterson I'm running from. He doesn't count above a four-spot. But there are other men after me, men I don't know. I'll take Patterson's guns away from him and slap his face. But those others! To feel that every stranger you meet may pot you from behind. Pinkham, I'm scared of that kind."



Boise Basin, Idaho

The former sheriff stared at him in amazement and muttered:

"Guess I never did understand you. You've let drop some hints before this. Of course it's your business."

"I'd tell you if I was ready to tell any one. But it's the kind of business that makes bad listening for one's friends. I mustn't bring you into it."

"Blast your long face, Shoshoni! Think I'm a child to be scared by a bugaboo?"

"This goes back for some time," mumbled Hale. "I've kept north in the mountains hoping it would quit dogging me. When I was a younker I had a bad scare. It burned a hole through my soul that's never healed up. I can't shake off a certain feeling I have that I'm to be downed from behind with nary a chance to go for my gun. If I could set eyes on the men who are gunning for me so I'd know 'em when we meet I'd be the happiest man in the Territory. It's the uncertainty that takes the sand out of me. There's one man who knows who the men are, I reckon. But I don't have much chance of gitting him alone."

"Who's he?" snapped the ex-sheriff.

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"Curks in Boise City."

"Maybe I can reach him for you. But Patterson is one man you know about. You ride down the Payette Valley road and up north where they can't take you by surprize. I'll see if I can't prospect this Curks for the truth. If I get it I'll send it on to you. You'd better start right away."

"Wait. I have something to tell you. I've been hunting the streets for you and Jack Gorman. I'm in a fix." And he told of the murder of Lucky Tom, and produced the map and the writing signed by the dead man. In concluding he said, "They didn't want my mare or gold-dust—just me. None of Updyke's hand in that. It's a sample of how they plan to git me. Tom was killed because they saw my mare and thought he must be me. He never caught a glimpse of 'em. I'd have given a year of my life after it was all over if you could have been there to tell me what to do. I didn't dare bring his body in here and show the writing, for then they'd say I killed him after learning his secret and wrote this paper myself. To bring him in without showing the writing would have the whole pack saying: I killed him because he wouldn't tell me his secret. So I buried him near the creek and turned his horse loose to be picked up by the first passing wagon-train. If it hadn't been for telling you or Gorman I should have pushed north without coming here."

Pinkham chewed the ends of his mustache as he chewed the problem over. At last he said:

"It's mighty ugly no matter which way you look at it. You did the best thing in burying him and in keeping your mouth shut. As I figure it out there's none who knows you camped with him except the fellows who killed him; and for the time being they'll be thinking they plugged you. My first thought was to take some of the merchants into our confidence and tell them the whole thing, just as it happened. They know me and will bank on anything I say about you. But to prove the writing was genuine some one might ask you to let them try the map to make sure it wasn't any make-believe map. Once you did that the diggings would be open to everyone. So I size it up like this: no one knows you were with Tom except his murderers, and they won't know it unless they see you before you get away. If they find out after you're gone that you are alive they can't charge you with killing him without showing themselves up to you so's you'll know who they are. Sort of goes round in a circle. Did they ride north or south?"

"I don't know for sure, but am pretty positive they went south. Believing they'd finished me and being in with Curks they'd go back to Boise City. Understand, Updyke had no hand in this, or he'd gone for the dust."

"It's a dad-gummed puzzle," growled Pinkham. "I'll chew it over some more. Now you be stirring. Get started."

"I don't like the notion of Patterson crowing round town that he made me run," demurred Hale. "I've shown him up once; him and his shiny boots and woman's hands! I'm willing for him to git his gun clear——"

"None of that, my son! I never meddled with your affairs. What I know about you is only what you've told me. That's all I ask. But there's more'n one man who believes and says that you're a queer customer. Folks can't understand why a young man, knowing the country as you do, keeps at road-building and hunting instead of going crazy about gold and silver and diamonds."

"But you understand how I don't feel free to go where I'll meet strangers. I'll git over that feeling only after I learn who the men are that riddled poor Lucky Tom."

"You don't have to hash that over for me, son. I know. I'm just saying what folks are talking, who don't know any reason why you should keep out of the game, or why you go ranging round with Injuns. Now, on the hoof!"

"You're my friend. I'll git my rifle and mare and go."

"One thing. What kind of a gun do you calculate Tom was shot with?"

"Buffalo gun."

"That's handy to know if ever they bring it home to you. I can swear you carry a Henry. Guess that's all."

Hale rose and shook hands warmly.

"You've been a mighty good friend to me, Pinkham. Once I locate this placer of poor Tom's I'll take you in. Like Tom I haven't kin. Good-by. No need of your trailing round with me. I'll follow this back street down to the stable on the Boise road and strike off for Centerville without going through the town."

Pinkham preceded him to the door and reconnoitered the street. Various stores and saloons backed on it and the buildings

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on the other side were few and scattered.

"Patterson will probably be at the Gold Dust. I'll go there and tag him round. If he meets up with you before you can light out I'll be on hand to see you get an even shake. Good-by and good luck."

"Remember you're to have a slice of the diggings."

They shook hands again and Pinkham remained by the door, hand on his gun, and watched the tall figure swing down the road to the outlying stable. Then he passed through the store and walked along the main street to look for the gambler at the Gold Dust.

Hale saw nothing that suggested trouble, and striking into the stage road soon reached the stable. The moment he entered he received a great surprize: Old Idaho's daughter, the Prescott girl. She was still wearing her boy's togs and looked very young as she sat on a box and nursed a new Henry rifle. The moment she saw Hale she leaped to her feet and ran to him, crying:

"My goodness! How did you get here?"

"Just happened along," said Hale, wondering if he should drop the small hand or wait for her to withdraw it.

The stable-keeper came up and anxiously inquired—

"Do you know this young boy-gal?"

"Of course I know her. Ain't I talking to her?"

"Thank —— you know her!" cried the keeper. "Then you can coax her away from here."

"What do you mean by such crazy talk?"

"She's sp'iling my business. Driv two men away already," was the bitter reply.

The girl rested a hand on Hale's arm and explained: "They said bad things when they saw I was a girl. I told them I'd shoot them."

"Bully for you, little lady," warmly approved Hale. "Next time do your talking after you shoot. How did you come here?"

He was now very proud to find he could use his tongue, that his strange embarrassment in her presence was leaving him.

"Made granddaddy bring me. I couldn't rest till I got my rifle. Ain't it fine we two should meet here?"

"The best thing I could wish for," he told her. "But why are you waiting here alone?"

She frowned; then laughed.

"I'm not alone so long as I have my rifle. Now you've come I have two for company. We left our horses here. Granddaddy had some business. He left me here while he went back to finish up."

"Why didn't he take you with him?"

"I don't like your talk," she informed him. "I reckoned you'd be glad I was here, that you could see me."

"I am; I am," he warmly declared. "But you git to town so seldom—and there are stores to visit—and—and— Well, Miss Harriet, I ain't a polite man. I never had a chance to git the sabe of it. I'm about as much at home with young women as I'd be with eagles. But something tells me that you shouldn't be left alone in stables."

"This is a honest place of business and no one asked that young wild-cat to stick round here," spoke up the angry stable-keeper.

"My friend, you speak again and I'll throw you through the roof," gently warned Hale. To the girl, "How long have you waited?"

"Nearly an hour. He must have stopped to get some whisky. Sometimes he drinks too much."

"Did he have much dust with him?"

"Quite a bit."

Hale thought it over for half a minute. The last thing he wanted to do was to leave her. On the other hand it would never do for the old man to become incapacitated in Idaho City with money in his clothes. He decided his only course was to restore the old man to his granddaughter. His lean face was almost radiant as he next realized there was nothing to stop him from enjoying the girl's company down the valley. His road was theirs and he could ride with them as far as the cabin. If they should insist on his tarrying a bit it would be proof his luck was holding strong. Taking the stable-keeper aside he said:

"I'm going to find the little lady's grandfather. I've told her to kill any man who insults her while I'm gone. If any one does insult her I'll cut off both your ears when I come back. Maybe I'll kill you. Do you understand that talk?"

The keeper nodded his head violently and hoarsely defended:

"I can't stop strangers from speaking to her. If a man comes in and says 'howdy' she'd probably say she was 'sulted, and bore him. Now there's a cubby-hole back there where I sit and keep my accounts. She can stay in there. You get her to do it. And you'll fetch the old man soon, I hope."

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"As soon as I find him. Little lady, you're to be patient. There's a little room in back where you can wait for me to come back. I'll have your grandfather here in no time. Then I'll ride along with you, if I may."

"We'd be awfully pleased. That would more'n pay for my waiting in this place. I've got so many things I want to tell you and ask you. Don't you feel as if we'd known each other for a long time?"

"I'd be sorry to think of the time when I didn't know you."

"Just like we'd grown up together, you my big brother."

Hale looked dubious; then smiled sheepishly.

"All right. I'll be big brother. Never had no practise, but I'll do my best."

He knew he was running the risk of encountering Patterson by this return to town. Pinkham would be off his guard, taking it for granted the mare was bearing him rapidly away. Yet his heart was light as he took up his search, and his hand was ready for his revolver. Each glance was twofold in purpose, to discover the gambler bent on making his kill and to find Old Idaho.

His first stop was at the saloon where Pinkham had found him. He believed Old Idaho would start to rejoin his granddaughter and pause for whisky at the various bars. He was much pleased to behold the old man. He was disgusted to observe his behavior. He was talking garrulously and seemed to be half-intoxicated. Several men gathered about him were encouraging him to cut the cards for sizable wagers. He was being robbed most openly, although he was permitted to win occasionally. All the onlookers understood and yet none stepped in to object. Hale pushed forward and caught Old Idaho's arm and commanded:

"Come along! Your granddaughter is waiting for you."

Old Idaho stared foolishly into the stern face for a few moments, then recognized him and muttered:

"The tall cuss who lost the black mare. Have a snicker of whisky."

"One drink. Then we must go. Miss Harry's waiting at the stable. Worried, too."

"I must 'a' been longer than I'd reckoned on," mumbled the old man. "One drink and we'll go."

The interruption did not please Idaho's new acquaintances. One of them had just lost an ounce as further bait for the old man and was in an ugly mood. Thrusting himself between Idaho and Hale he demanded of the latter—

"Who in —— be you to come dancing and raring in here like a wild Injun?"

Driving the flat of his hand into the scowling face and sending the fellow bumping against the bar, Hale replied:

"I'm called Shoshoni Hale. Keep away!"

"The Injun man!" yelped the fellow so roughly repulsed; nor did he offer to move away from the bar.

"Any Injuns I run round with wouldn't be found dead with you, you coyote." Then to the bartender, "Never mind that other drink. My friend here is going now."

He slipped his arm around Old Idaho's waist and made for the rear door.

Some one crowded against him and whispered:

"Look out for yourself, Shoshoni. I'll take care of the old man. Patterson's outside. You're bound to meet him."

Hale halted and twisted his head. It was Jack Gorman. With a grunt of relief he relinquished his hold on Idaho and stepped aside for the two to leave the room ahead of him.

"Take him down to the stable on the stage-road, Jack," he directed. "I'll be along later."

"I wouldn't quit you if Pinkham wasn't close at hand," murmured Gorman.

Hale faced the gathering in the saloon and observed how intently some of them were staring at him. The bartender surreptitiously whispered to a customer, who repeated it to another man. As the word was passed in this stealthy fashion one recipient won Hale's good opinion by speaking up and warning—

"You'd better be ready to use some of them guns you're carrying the minute you git outside, stranger."

"Thanks. I'll be ready," replied Hale. "I'm just waiting till the old man is taken out of range of any careless shooting.

He walked to the rear door and peered out. An immaculate figure, patent leather boots and all, was negligently leaning against a hitching-post at the junction of the street and the stage-road. Hale must pass the gambler in returning to the stable. With the door ajar he studied the dapper figure for some moments, wondering how

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the gambler knew he was in the saloon and would be going back to the stable. It proved Patterson's tools had kept a sharp watch on him ever since his arrival in town.

He waited until Gorman and Old Idaho had passed the gambler and turned into the stage-road; then he removed the key from the door and locked it behind him as he stepped into the street. They were all strangers to him in the barroom, and the old fear of being struck down from behind forbade his taking any chances. With a backward glance to make sure no foe was hiding up the street he took the middle of the road and walked toward the gambler.

Down the stage-road a bit Gorman had come to a halt and was waiting for the climax. Old Idaho seemed well recovered, for he was standing erect without support. As Hale advanced Patterson leisurely straightened and brushed the black sleeve that had rested on the post. He wore no weapons in sight, and this fact puzzled Hale.

Patterson now began to walk toward Hale, moving slowly.

According to mining-camp ethics Hale was justified in shooting on sight because of the other's public vow to kill with the same lack of ceremony.

Faces filled the rear windows of the buildings on Hale's right. Across the street men peered around corners of houses, or took shelter behind rocks, all eagerly waiting for the duel to begin. Patterson's record as a street-fighter was well known, and the fact he had passed through many such encounters proved his shrewdness and deadly marksmanship. Hale's reputation, distorted by gossip, was that of a bad man to cross.

In truth, Idaho City never saw the stage set for a more dramatic situation. And women's faces were not lacking from the different windows. Honest women bravely intent on making homes in this new land and their less fortunate sisters, who would never again know what home meant.

It was as if the entire town knew of the impending tragedy and had ceased its usual activities to play spectator. A silence filled the street, nor was there the usual confusion of sounds from the main street. By word of mouth it had been announced—

"Patterson and Shoshoni Hale are meeting up!"

The two men drew closer together, neither making a move toward a weapon. The silence was first broken by a woman's hysterical voice screaming—

"They'll kill each other!"

Onward the two walked, each looking straight ahead. Then came the second interruption of the silence, a man crying from a store window—

"Behind you, Shoshoni!"

Hale would have taken it as a ruse had not the voice instantly added:

"Pinkham talking. For God's sake—behind you!"

Hale twisted his head and glimpsed a furtive figure dropping behind an empty barrel. He faced about expecting to meet Patterson's fire yet determined not to be the first to draw. He was amazed to behold the gambler had halted and was making no move to go after his gun.

"Behind you, Shoshoni!" yelled Pinkham.

Hale spun about in time to behold a stockily built man resting on one knee and bringing a heavy navy revolver down to a level. With legerdemain seldom if ever witnessed in Idaho City before Hale's right hand gun leaped from the holster and exploded a second ahead of the assassin's weapon. The instant he fired he pivoted on his heel, his revolver half-raised, but Patterson had drawn no weapon. Even as Hale glared at him, bewildered that he should let such an opportunity pass, Patterson folded his arms across his white shirt. Then he faced down the street and walked away.

The street was silent no longer. Women screamed from upper windows. Men yelled hoarsely and swarmed into the road. From back doors, from around buildings, from behind rocks and mounds of earth they came, making much noise but saying nothing intelligible. Hale knew what was drawing them into the road. He remained staring after Patterson and slowly replaced his revolver.

Pinkham ran up to him and cried—

"You got him dead center!"

"I had to. Who was he?"

"Sydney Bill!"

"But what does it all mean? I never saw the man. I never harmed him. Why did he lay for me like that?"

"It was a put-up job. They say now that Patterson hasn't a gun on him. The way my friends figure it out, and I agree with them, he wanted you to get word he was after you. He knew you wouldn't draw

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first, but that you'd be watching him mighty sharp. While you had your eye on him, Sydney Bill would drop you from behind and trust to the sheriff to get him clear."

"I can't see why Sydney Bill should dip into my game," persisted Hale.

"Orders from Updyke and his Boise City crowd," snapped Pinkham. "Here comes Bowen now. Hold your temper."

The sheriff, a tool of scoundrels, came running up from where the crowd was standing around the body of Sydney Bill. His first words were—

"You're arrested for killing that man!"

"His arrest is merely a form, of course," quietly said Pinkham.

"Merely a matter of form when he kills a man in the street of this town?" indignantly cried the sheriff.

"Bah!" jeered Pinkham. "He killed a scoundrel who was trying to murder him. The crowd saw it. Release him in my custody."

"Some of the crowd saw it different than you did, perhaps," growled the sheriff. "There are men here who say he shot that poor devil down without any cause."

"Then you'd better hustle back and hide his gun before any more citizens inspect it," advised Pinkham. "He certainly never fired it after he was hit. Of course there'll be a hearing. Release him in my custody."

"He's a friend of yours. You'd stand up for him no matter what he did," hotly accused the sheriff.

"I tried to pot that scoundrel from the window up there. But he was on my side of the street and got out of range before I could shoot. He had his gun aimed at my friend and would have killed him if I hadn't shouted a warning."

"Pinkham, you keep out of this. Street fighting is going to stop in Idaho City."

"This particular fight is all over," said Hale. "I'm not aiming for any trouble. I'm under arrest for killing a murderous villain. I didn't know him from a Pawnee Indian, but I'm told he was a bad one with a record that reaches to Frisco."

"Australian convict. Got away from Frisco by the skin of his teeth," said Pinkham. "Do you mean to tell these citizens that you refuse to leave this man in my custody?"

Bowen hesitated, and glanced around the circle of grim faces. He was ever a weakling; and there were men watching him who, he knew, would stand by the former sheriff. Updyke of Boise City would have maintained the position first taken; Bowen lacked the stamina.

"All right," he sullenly surrendered. "But I'll hold you responsible."

"Take me down to the stable. I must see about my mare," Hale requested. "Then I want to talk with this man Patterson."

"Keep quiet. Don't make out that you're a man-eater," whispered Pinkham. "Most of these fellows here are my friends. Keep your mouth shut and you'll be all right."

The sheriff already had observed that his friends were in the minority. It was his wish to place Hale in the new thirteen-thousand dollar jail, but too many stern-faced men were speaking to him through Pinkham. With an attempt at official dignity the sheriff announced:

"All we want is law and order. Every killing must be looked into. This man, who's said to live with Injuns, has shot down a stranger in our streets. If any one but Sumner Pinkham had asked me to let him go free until the hearing I'd have to refuse. But he can go and Pinkham will be responsible for his not leaving town till this killing's cleared up."

With that he strode back to the dead desperado. The circle about Hale began to disintegrate.

Pinkham said:

"Well, that's settled. Of course you must stick here with me."

"I'll stick as long as you tell me," Hale moodily promised. "But I'd planned to ride down the Payette road with Old Idaho and his granddaughter. Of course I'm keen to git back north."

"You need something for your nerves. If I was quick as a wild-cat and as big as a hill I wouldn't turn my back on the worst gun-fighter living."

Hale smiled sardonically. He couldn't make his friend understand it wasn't physical fear that drove him to the friendly solitudes up north. Nor could he explain it to himself except to say he was "scared," which permitted of misinterpretation. In a vague fashion he knew his fear was based on the shock he had received when a boy of sixteen. Many times in his dreams he had lived through that terrible tragedy, and the impress it had left on his mind was not to be shaken off because he was twenty-two

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instead of sixteen. But he did believe that once he could identify those inexorable men who had trailed him with such savage persistency he could meet his destiny with a quiet mind and a quick hand. But the thought that his murderers might be found in any group of strangers eroded his nerve force. He felt as if he were being trailed by ghosts.

The two friends met Jack Gorman shortly after turning into the stage-road.

"I saw it all," congratulated Gorman, wringing Hale's hand. "I knew Pink was on the spot and that you'd have fair play, or I'd have quit the old feller and come a-shooting. That old cuss is queer. You turned him over to me wobbly drunk, and I delivered him to the little girl sober. Say, Shoshoni, she's a jim-dandy! About big enough to be a kid brother. She knocked me clean over. And in buckskin! No bigger'n a quart of cherries. And so used to that rig that I reckon she don't feel natural in petticoats. No law ag'in me riding down the valley road to their shack some day, is there, Shoshoni? Or is it your discovery claim?"

"I haven't any claim there, Jack," Hale morosely replied. "My affairs ain't yet in shape for me to go prospecting around for any young women. But, Jack, if you hit the valley road don't ask me to wish you luck. Are they still at the stable?"

"Old man couldn't git away fast enough. The kid sorter held back, but he made her ride."

"Then there's no need of my going there just now. I want to see this Patterson. Let's go to the Gold Dust."

"All you need is just to kill one more man to get into a noose," remonstrated Pinkham. "Better go to my room and take it easy."

"He ain't done nothing to make him hide from that card-sharp," muttered Gorman. "Time he had a show-down with that gambler. Time he had a talk with him. If Patterson is making a war-smoke it's time Shoshoni was reading his signals. If he has crawled then Shoshoni won't be digging up a gun when it ain't necessary."

Pinkham did not relish the idea of the two men meeting. On the other hand he understood how Hale might be charged with cowardice if he went into hiding.

"All right," he finally agreed. "We'll look him up just to show folks we ain't scared of him. But no abuse; no fighting talk."

Their entrance to the Gold Dust saloon created a sensation. The patrons crowded against the walls and left a wide aisle the full length of the bar-room. Patterson was not in sight, but the behavior of the company told the three men he was close at hand. Leaning across the bar, Pinkham informed the frightened bartender, "We want to see Patterson a minute. Tell him he needn't come with his hands on his guns unless he's hunting trouble. My friend won't draw unless he does."

The bartender hurried into the back room, where the games were run at night, and returned in a few moments with Patterson walking behind him. The gambler used the bartender as a cover until nearly up to the trio. Then he stepped one side and eyed them impassively.

"My friend, Shoshoni Hale, got your war-talk, Patterson," began the former sheriff. "When he found you stalking him on the back street he expected gun-play. The way you acted is clean beyond his *sabe*."

"I'm not responsible for any war-talk that's peddled around this town," calmly replied the gambler. "I was trailing a man who was in my place last night and lost and won some gold dust. The dust he won was the pure quill. The dust he lost wasn't worth a ——. Counterfeit. The meeting with Hale was an accident. I knew our names had been hitched together. When I saw him coming I couldn't turn and run. I had no weapons except a small derringer. Now you've called in here and sent for me to come out and meet you. What's the word?"

"Only to know if it's a case of shoot when we next meet," Hale informed. "I've been told that you've made threats against me, and have said you were afraid of me and would shoot in self-defense when you met me. You played that trick in the stable at Boise City. While you were pulling your gun you yelled for 'help,' and said you was 'afraid' of me. And all the time I hadn't made a move. The yarn sounded likely and I believed it. So I reckoned I'd talk with you before these men and find out just what to expect."

"You gun-fighters are always looking for a chance to show how smart you are," sneered Patterson. "Yanking out a gun before a man of peace can get started is the

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one thing you like to do. As for being afraid of you I say right now I *am* afraid of you. Just as I'm afraid of an Indian who gets behind me. As for the next time we meet I sha'n't move to draw unless you do. Of course that gives you an advantage, as I'm not a gunman."

Hale chuckled, genuinely amused for the first time since Lucky Tom's death.

"In a way, Patterson, you're all right," he grudgingly admitted. "Some may think it's a blamed poor way; but it's your way, and you're all right. I'll tell you and all men here that you have nothing to fear from me unless you try to murder me. I'll never dig for my belt until after you've started to draw. I'll give you that much of a start so there won't be any talk among your friends. I'm not going to ask you about your friend Sydney Bill——"

"Never a friend of mine. He was a low dog. I'm glad you killed him," fiercely broke in Patterson.

"Well, I'm not going to talk about him, although there are men who are mighty curious to learn how he knew I'd be walking down that street, my eyes fastened on you. I'll only say this, that if ever you try to draw on me I'll git you. I won't run much risk in letting you git your gun clear before I begin operating. It's mighty queer the man I shot should happen to jump me while you was holding my attention at the end of the street. Probably he was the man you were looking for, the fellow who swapped bad dust for good."

Patterson smiled and shook his head and softly answered:

"No; he wasn't the man. The man I was after once had a dog shot near his home. I'm sending word for him to come and see me and fix things up so he won't get into trouble."

Hale's thin face remained as noncommittal as an Indian's, but Patterson knew, he understood by watching his eyes. Patterson was charging Old Idaho with counterfeiting gold dust. The accusation was grotesque. Yet there was a deadly quality in the man, a subtle evil which might carry him far in his designs. Hale realized all this and it troubled him hugely. Apparently none of the spectators had the remotest idea as to whom the gambler was referring.

"I'm not interested in your losses," said Hale. "But I advise you to take your pay in dust when you come to a settlement."

"Thank you for nothing," said Patterson with a smile and polite bow. "Now if you gentlemen haven't anything more to say I'll go back to my room and get a little sleep."

Suddenly Hale's worry was doubled. "See here, Patterson, I want a word with you aside. Perhaps we can come to a clearer understanding of several things."

The gambler cast a quick glance up and down the long room. He had too many friends there for Hale to attempt any violence. Also, he believed, Hale was troubled. Stepping down the bar and motioning the bartender to withdraw he waited for Hale to join him. With a gesture for Gorman and Pinkham to stay back Hale approached the gambler and murmured:

"You meant Old Idaho. I know about you shooting the dog you gave his girl. You're crazy to think you can work anything like that."

"Those are all your words," was the quiet rejoinder. "But what if I can prove it?"

"You can't prove it by honest men," said Hale. "I wanted to tell you this much; you bother the girl and you'll answer to me; and I won't be over fussy in letting you have much advantage on the draw."

Patterson was facing the bar, his profile to Hale, but the plate-glass mirror on the wall revealed his triumphant smile. The gambler replied—

"All depending, of course, if you're at liberty to chip in."

"Meaning Sydney Bill. I'll lose no liberty over him."

"I wasn't thinking of Bill. He needed killing bad. I was wondering if something else might not turn up."

"Such as what?" taunted Hale.

"Oh, it's none of my game. I ain't even looking on, let alone taking cards. What's coming to you will be because of *you* and not of me."

"Such as what?" smilingly persisted Hale, now sensing a trap.

"Lord bless you! How should I know? But for example—just for an example—say the trouble starts for you over a horse."

Hale laughed softly and felt much relieved.

"The Boise City judge is a rascal, but even he gave me a clean bill of health. Gorman and Pinkham both will identify me and the mare."

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"I didn't say 'mare.' I said a 'horse,'" corrected Patterson, turning from the bar.

And with a mocking smile for Hale and a bow for Pinkham and Gorman he retired to the rear of the building where he had a room off the gambling hall.

"How much good did your talk do you?" grumbled Pinkham. "You look like you'd drawn cards on his deal."

"Get outside," said Hale.

Once they were on the street Hale led the way to the entrance of the Jenny Lind Theater where there were no loungers to spy on their talk, and repeated what the gambler had said.

"He's a cheap dog!" hotly declared Pinkham. "He's trying to bluff you."

"I've only seen the girl twice. I don't want any trouble to come to her," said Hale. "She's alone in the world except for her grandfather. Patterson went down there and tried to steal her and the old man ran him off. Of course if he could git the old man out of the way if only for a few days, or if he could scare him with his threats, it would be bad for the girl."

"But he can't!" exploded Gorman, and adding a round oath for good measure. "Let him try it and if you ain't on hand I'll chip in."

Pinkham sighed regretfully and said:

"Wish Patterson had made a move this morning so you could have drilled him! He's up to some sort of ——. Old Idaho hasn't enough brains to pass any counterfeit dust. That's all bosh. The old man probably does a little placer mining on the side and picks up a few ounces. But his diggings, wherever they are, can't be fat enough to tempt a Chinaman to pay his six dollars a month tax. And yet, if he starts he'll be going after something. He isn't a fool."

Gorman wrinkled his nose thoughtfully and announced:

"The point that worries me the most is his talk about getting Hale into trouble. About a horse. A horse! Say, Shoshoni, shake your brains and see if there's ever been any time when you had a run-in over a horse."

"Never! Some one stole my mare and I got her back."

"It's all foolishness. He's trying to scare you," declared Pinkham.

They talked further and arrived nowhere. Hale announced a desire to visit the stable and see that his mare was all right. Gorman offered to accompany him. Pinkham had business to attend to, and explained, "I've promised to meet a man at the warm springs. I'll be back some time tomorrow. Stay with Gorman, Shoshoni, and if Bowen tries anything funny send out word by one of the boys. If Ben Riply comes to town tell him I want to see him at once."

After calling at the stable the two wandered into the hills back of the town and used up the afternoon. Returning to Gorman's room they decided to take in the theater. They had eaten their supper and were strolling toward the Forrest Theater when a stranger to Hale hurriedly called Gorman one side and whispered at some length.

Gorman rejoined Hale and informed him:

"My friend says Lucky Tom's horse has been found on the stage-road and that it's being said he's been murdered. They know when Tom left Boise City and have traced him, they think, to within ten miles of here. Men are now out searching both sides of the road."

Hale felt his heart contracting. He had told Gorman nothing about the miner's death. He would have given much could Pinkham been present to advise him. More deliberate meditation allowed him to minimize his fears. Of course the miner's horse would be found. He had known that from the first. Perhaps he had taken it for granted the animal would be picked up by passing wagon or pack-train and quietly appropriated. It was not until they were entering the theater and he was weighing the advisability of inflicting this fresh trouble on Gorman that he realized the possibility of Lucky Tom's disappearance coming to the ears of his unknown enemies through the finding of the horse. If the miner's grave were found—and Hale had made no attempt to conceal it—then the murderers would learn of their error.

He whispered to Gorman five minutes after they had taken their seats:

"Let's git out of here where we can breathe. I've something to tell you."

Gorman led the way from the theater without a word and turned toward the outskirts of the town. Hale told him all he had told Pinkham. Gorman was bewildered. So far as the horse was concerned he did not believe there was anything to fear.

"It's too much for my poor brains," he admitted. "Pinkham will be back tomorrow.

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I'll send a boy to him in the morning. Let him wrestle with it. No one knows you camped with Tom."

They turned back to the center of the town. The streets were always lively at night, but the stir and bustle into which Hale and his friend walked was caused by something outside routine happenings. A mob of men and a score of women were standing, strangely silent, before the Gold Dust Saloon. Farther down the street was another group listening to a violent harangue by a man on a box. A hoarse roar greeted his speech. This display of violent emotion was in marked contrast to the ominous silence of the gathering before the saloon. Each seemed to be a distinct locus of interest.

"Let's find out what has happened. It's something unusual," said Gorman.

"Wait," restrained Hale, seizing his friend by the arm. "Hope I'm wrong, but I feel it has to do with me in some shape. I won't walk into it blind."

"I see a man coming who will know. Stay here and I'll learn the truth," exclaimed Gorman.

He darted down the street and for a few moments was lost to view. Then he reappeared in the lights shining from Vantine's store. The man he met, and who was drawing close to the store window to escape the jostling throng, was undersized and slight of physique. As the light struck his face Hale instinctively drew back to the corner of the building. He saw Gorman stagger backward as if struck in the face. The little man resumed his way, walking with mincing steps. Gorman followed behind him. Hale hugged the wall until the little man had passed by. Gorman was breathless with excitement. Without a word he took Hale by the arm and led him into the gloom of a back street.

"——'s to pay!" he gasped. "Ben Riply says they've found Lucky Tom's body and that folks are saying that you killed him!"

"Who told them? The names?" hungrily cried Hale.

"Riply doesn't know. A letter was left at the express office for him. There wasn't any name signed. Left by some one who knows his work with the Payette Committee takes him into the express offices every day."

"My luck's against me. Why, Jack, if I could know who left that writing I could point out one of the murderers. I'd be knowing one of the men who's dogged my steps."

"You must get clear of town before morning. Get your mare and ride for it before they think to watch the stable and lay for you. I know you're all right, Shoshoni, and Pinkham's word will satisfy men like Riply. But Pinkham isn't here and you must dig out."

"I promised to stick here. I was left in Pinkham's custody. I won't run."

"Then we must keep out of sight until Pinkham gets back. We'd best go to my room and take it easy."

But Hale was opposed to the suggestion and insisted—

"I can't be cooped up in a room. We'll stay outside."

"They got his horse and they found his body," muttered Gorman. "Riply said he hadn't told any one about the writing, and yet that feller on the box down the street has used your name and is calling on the mob to find and hang you. Riply's trying to get some of the decent men together to prevent any mob hanging till all the facts are known. Wish Pinkham would come!"

"And there was the crowd in front of the Gold Dust Saloon."

"I asked Riply but he hadn't been there and didn't know what it meant. Probably another crowd talking over Lucky Tom's death."

"No one seemed to be talking. Every one seemed to be mighty quiet," mused Hale.

"That's a bad sign for the fellow they get after," said Gorman uneasily. "Being let loose in Pinkham's charge didn't mean you was to stay here and be hung while he's out of town. I have it. Get your mare and ride out to the springs. Then you'll be out of town and still in his charge."

This appealed to Hale as being sensible and he allowed Gorman to lead the way toward the stable on the stage-road. All the excitement seemed to be radiating from Main Street, and the two friends were following along Wall. What men and women they met were in a hurry to reach the center of the scene and gave them no heed. As they passed an opening between the express office and a store they could look on to the lighted thoroughfare, and it was a most dramatic spectacle. Men were marching and counter-marching four abreast and in a rude chorus were shouting:

"Lynch him! String him up!"

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There seemed to be two distinct parades of would-be executioners.

"——! They're sure after you, Shoshoni! Divided into two bands to make certain!" hoarsely whispered Gorman. "Riply's changed his mind and rounded up the citizens. T'other band is made up of scum."

"I won't be hung by either vigilantes or a mob," snarled Hale. "I'll ride for the mountains. Tell Pinkham why I had to light out. When it quiets down I'll return and face the music."

A man ran through the opening and fairly into Gorman's arms. He was puffing violently. As Gorman pushed him back he gave a snort of disgust and growled:

"Never thought to get so close to you, Three-Spot. What do you mean, you drunken thief, by running into me like that?"

"Lem'me go! Lem'me go!" the fellow fairly howled. "They're going to hang him! I can't see 'em do it! They're going to snake him out of the Gold Dust and crack his neck!"

"Whose neck? Who's at the Gold Dust?" growled Gorman, seizing the man by the throat and choking him.

Hale released his friend's hands and patted the derelict on the back until he recovered his breath. Then he quietly said:

"Now tell us about it. Then you can go. Who's at the Gold Dust waiting to be hung?"

"Ferd Patterson!" faintly whispered Three-Spot.

Gorman and Hale were too dumfounded to speak.

Three-Spot added—

"You know he killed Sumner Pinkham out at the springs a few hours ago?"

CHAPTER V

FLIGHT

IDAHO CITY knew no rest that night. The killing of Pinkham, a purely political murder, overshadowed the death of Lucky Tom for the time, and the latter homicide in turn distracted attention from the charge now made public by Patterson that Old Idaho was responsible for the bogus gold dust dumped into stores, saloons and gambling places. Any of the three matters, taken alone, would have been quickly and ruthlessly investigated by the citizen body. Pinkham's death, however, took precedence. According to impartial eyewitnesses, Patterson arrived at the springs and inquired for Pinkham. Coming upon him suddenly he was further charged with taking the initiative by rushing forward as if to attack and at the same time making threatening gestures. Pinkham, not expecting any trouble, was slow in attempting to reach for a weapon and was instantly shot dead.

The temper of the decent element clamored for immediate justice and for an hour or two it did appear as if the gambler would be hanged. But Patterson had foreseen this righteous indignation and promptly surrendered to the authorities and demanded protection, claiming the killing was in self-defense. The roughs of the town including all those who belonged to the organized band of law-breakers, shouted hoarsely in defense of the slayer and began pushing forward witnesses who would swear the former sheriff was the aggressor. Added to such efforts was the undercurrent of vicious threats to burn the town if the prisoner were harmed.

C. S. Kingley, a Methodist minister, called a meeting of honest citizens in an underground warehouse and sounded public opinion as to what should be done to stem the tide of ruthless violence. Fifty representative men were there and were soon joined by Ben Riply. Riply, as the mouthpiece for the very effective Payette Committee, gave some excellent advice and urged against anything smacking of mob violence.

While known to be inexorable in demanding the punishment of evil-doers he was the first to advise that the case be permitted to go to trial. Riply was a shrewd fellow and his purpose in counselling this moderation may have disappointed the more hot-headed of the citizens, but it served a double purpose: it gave time for reflection and orderly procedure, always most impressive in citizens' tribunals, and it would reveal how far the sheriff and his tools were inclined to support law and order and how thorough the courts could be in measuring out justice.

WHILE this grave deliberation was occupying the attention of Idaho City's honest men Shoshoni Hale was riding his swift mare over the mountain road to Centerville. He passed

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through the town in the darkness without stopping and continued along the road to Placerville. Entering the Payette River Valley road, he crossed the river shortly after midnight and would have made for the foothills of the Saw Tooth range if not for the need of warning Old Idaho of Patterson's accusation.

When he, accompanied by Gorman, went to the stable to get his rifle and mare, the stable-keeper had heard nothing of Pinkham's death but was very deeply incensed at Old Idaho for passing worthless dust.

Now as he followed the empty road, lighted vaguely by the brilliant heavens, he found time to assemble various facts and to analyze the total result. He was compelled to respect the astuteness of the gambler. In comparison Shoshoni Hale was a child, he told himself. Now he knew what Patterson had meant when speaking of trouble starting over a horse. The gambler was one of the first to know that Lucky Tom's horse had been found and was being brought to Idaho City.

But to use it in his veiled threat he also must have been informed of Hale's presence in the miner's camp. Only Lucky Tom's murderers could have told him that. It followed that he also was aware of the death of the miner and that the body would be produced. Hale firmly believed the gambler wrote the unsigned message which was left at the express office for Ben Riply.

In brief, Patterson must be in alliance with Hale's secret enemies. The killing of Sydney Bill could not be utilized for Hale's undoing so long as Sumner Pinkham lived. Pinkham was accordingly put out of the way. Hale stood between Patterson and "Harry" Idaho, as the Prescott girl was commonly called. The elimination of Pinkham threw Hale onto his own resources, and Hale was not on his own stamping grounds.

Hale's flight would leave the girl depending upon her grandfather for protection. The gambler already owed the old man a grudge for running him out of the valley. The charge of counterfeiting would remove Old Idaho from the gambler's path. Shoshoni Hale slowly summed it up to the accompaniment of his horse's flying hoofs:

"Pinkham dead. Me hung for Tom's death, or running away. Idaho jailed. Girl alone. He's the true son of the devil!"

Hale was direct in his thinking and acting. Such duplicity astounded him. His life was composed of dangers and hardships, but never had he come in contact with a man so subtly evil. So while Patterson was given the best room in the new jail, and was waited upon by a guard who was his admirer and willing tool, and held a little court for the procession of his friends and associates, and lavishly supplied with the best food and drink obtainable, the tall road-builder was fleeing to find a place where he could outline his own campaign.

From what Gorman profanely told him while they made for the stable he inferred the gambler would suffer none at the hands of the law. His perjured witnesses would testify Pinkham attacked first. It might be the vigilants would take the case into their own hands but each day of delay lessened that possibility.

Hale was shrewd of wit enough to know that while the night would be spent in exhausting the thrills emanating from the Pinkham murder the first light of morning would reveal the result of the prisoner's conference with his friends. There would be much clamor over Lucky Tom's death, which would gradually rival the Pinkham homicide as a popular topic. The charge against Old Idaho would steadily demand recognition and result in obtaining it. For while the murder of Pinkham would horrify and enrage all decent men, the passing of bogus dust was a crime that threatened the prosperity of the evil as well as the good.

IT WAS two o'clock in the morning of the new day when Hale left his mare back of the cottonwoods and made for the double cabin. He rapped sharply on the door and heard the gun barrel scrape as it was thrust through the loophole.

"Who be you? Give your business. I'm about ready to fire," called out Old Idaho's voice.

"Shoshoni Hale. It's your business more'n mine. Put up that gun and open the door."

"I'll open my door to no man this time of night. Git out, or I'll shoot."

"Don't be a fool. I'm out of range. I tell you to open the door and let me in, or else come out here. It concerns you, not me."

"I know his voice, granddaddy," Hale

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heard the girl call out. "Open the door and have him in."

"Git back to bed you young fool," growled the old man. Then to Hale: "Wait a minute. You must be crazy to come round here rousing me out at this hour."

Hale sat down on the log that served as a doorstep, his rifle across his knees. After some minutes the door opened and Old Idaho stepped out and fiercely demanded—

"Now what does this mean?"

"Let's walk down to the river so the girl can't hear," whispered Hale.

"Not by a derned sight! What's your game? You was to ride down here with us, Harry said. Then you got into some kind of trouble and couldn't come. I don't want to mix up with any one that's having trouble in Idaho City. You won't git me away from my house to-night. And remember I have a weapon in my hand."

Hale turned it over in his mind and decided that it would be impossible to keep the absurd charge from the girl. He quietly replied:

"It's best to talk here. They've started the story in Idaho City that you've been passing counterfeit gold dust——"

"What!" shrilly screamed the old man. "Me? Of all the dod-rotted lies——"

"Oh, I don't believe it," impatiently broke in Hale. "If it wasn't for the fact that the skunks up there seem to be running the town I wouldn't have bothered to wake you up. I've got troubles enough of my own to keep me busy and on the hoof. Sumner Pinkham, my friend, was killed by Fred Patterson yesterday——"

"Oh, lord!"

"And the —— to pay in general." Then with a bitter laugh: "They're after me, too. They tried to make out I murdered Sydney Bill, who was trying to shoot me in the back. Pinkham stepped on that and now they charge me with killing Lucky Tom, a miner who struck it rich somewhere. The killing of Sydney Bill doesn't worry me any as too many men saw how it happened. But the other charge isn't one I care to face until honest men git hold of the reins in Idaho City. If Pinkham was alive I wouldn't worry any. He understood the truth. So does Jack Gorman. But I had to have Pinkham behind to be sure of a square deal. So I ran for it. If you're wise you'll do the same. It's all a game of Patterson's to git me out of the way. If you can send the girl to some friends, where she'll be safe, why, then you'd best stick here."

"Ain't got no friends I can send her to," the old man said in a quavering voice, and Hale heard his teeth clicking with fear.

"I have friends in Lewiston she could go to. Their women-folks——"

"But we'd have to go with her. We'd be overtook afore we could make it," complained the old man, his voice trembling.

There came a swift patter of small moccasins and the girl, fully dressed in her buckskin trousers and boy's blouse, stepped through the doorway and stood between them. She quietly informed them:

"I've heard all that you two have said. My grandfather doesn't run because a murdering gambler tells lies about him."

"Well, there's a lot hoss sense in that," admitted Hale, beginning to believe he had measured the old man's danger from the wrong view-point. "Reckon I was thinking more and fearing more that you'd be left alone."

"It's the most ridiculous thing I ever heard of!" she passionately exclaimed. "It's bad enough for you to run away. But are honest people to dig to cover every time a liar tells wrong stories about them? If my granddaddy was as young as you he'd go up there and make them eat their lying words." Her indignation was superb. "How can this gambler kill a good man like Sumner Pinkham and still have power to harm innocent people?"

"His friends run the town. The sheriff is his friend. If the honest men don't take him out and hang him he'll go into court and be acquitted. Meanwhile his friends will carry out his orders. He planned Pinkham's death in cold blood. He knew he must surrender to the sheriff to escape lynching. He'd figured it all out."

"But surely there's enough men in Idaho City to see my granddaddy doesn't come to any hurt," she protested.

Hale felt very sheepish for having brought such a story to the cabin. It was almost as bad as if he had accused the girl's grandfather of the crime.

"Reckon you're right, Miss Harry," he capitulated. "You must be always right. I can't figure out how you'd ever be wrong. It ain't possible. I got over excited because I knew it was one of Patterson's plans; and he's the very devil for thinking

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up mischief, Miss Harry. He fixed it so I had to clear out and stay out till sure of a fair hearing."

Old Idaho surprized them by tremulously announcing:

"We must clear out, Harry. They'll rig up some devil's game to hang me. When they're mad they'd just as soon hang a innocent man as a guilty one. You hustle inside and make up your pack. We'll dig right out."

For a few moments the girl was too astounded to speak. When she could find her tongue she cried:

"See what your wild story has done, Shoshoni Hale! Have you lost your senses, granddaddy? Where can we go to?"

Old Idaho fumbled around in his mind for some sane reply and finally spoke of Umatilla and the coast.

"But that would mean to leave your home for good," they cried, aghast.

"Well, where would we go to at this time of night, with no warning, nor nothing?" he querulously demanded.

Hale spoke up, saying:

"I don't urge the plan I had in mind when coming here. I'm just talking, that's all. But I'm going to hide up not very far from here. It's a place that no man's visited yet except one. That one man's dead. If you two want to go along with me you're welcome. You'll have to rough it a bit, I reckon; but you'd be within striking distance of your home and I'm sure you could find enough gold to pay for what crops you might lose."

"Gold!" Old Idaho exclaimed in a husky whisper.

"Honest, innocent people don't run away!" insisted the girl.

"I'm innocent. I sure am running," was Hale's grim reply.

"Oh, if I was a man!" she cried.

"Exactly," said Hale gravely. "If you was a man, Miss Harry, you'd be a caution. You'd stay and fight it out. That's what you mean, isn't it?"

Her bobbing head shut out the light of a blazing star as she nodded an affirmative. But as for that phenomenon her curly head was shutting out all the world from Shoshoni Hale's consciousness. He apologetically continued:

"Of course you would, Miss Harry. And you're asking yourself why I don't try that same trick. I'd have stayed if by doing so I could git a chance to fight. That's all I ask, a fair fight, or a fight that's somewhere near fair. But even Jack Gorman—and no one ever calls him a coward—wouldn't listen to anything except that I ride for it. And, well, Miss Harry, not to put too fine a point to it, I ain't too high-spirited to show my heels when it comes to being done to death without having nary a show."

She was impressed by his honest speech and did not answer at once. Then she said—

"Where is this place you'd take us to?"

"In a lost gulch, twenty miles across the river. I've never been there."

"How do you know there is such a place?" she curiously asked.

"Reckon you don't trust me," he mournfully remarked. "Don't know as I blame you. It's where a miner, Lucky Tom, got his dust. He's dead. He gave the diggings to me. No one ever tracked him to the gulch. So I reckon no one but him has been there. He gave me a map of the place."

Old Idaho underwent a startling metamorphosis. He grabbed at Hale's arm as if fearing he would run away. In a half-strangled voice in which exultation and anger were strangely mingled he cried:

"Lucky Tom's diggings! ——! It's what I've been looking for, searching for, dreamed of, praying for! Go? Of course we'll go. All Boise County can't stop me! Good heavens above! That gulch by discovery belongs to me! Harry, do up a bundle. A small one! We'll need our packs for powder'n such like. Oh, law! To think there ain't no need of the other thing no more!"

"Granddaddy! You're acting beside yourself," anxiously cried the girl. "To leave our home—in the night! To run away and hide like thieves! We can't do it!"

"Harry, you keep shet," his panting voice commanded. "It's my one chance. The chance I've hankered for. The chance that fetched me back to this place." Then in a low whisper, "As for what they say I did I might have trouble proving that I didn't."

"That gang will swear that you put out the bogus dust," agreed Hale. "They'd swear a man's life away for an ounce of dust."

"And if we run away they'd make some

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folks believe it was true," the girl spiritedly insisted.

Hale could not refute the logic of this remonstrance.

"I reckon Miss Harry has the right of it, Idaho. Yes, she's got the right of it. All I've been thinking about was how that snake of a Patterson would bedevil her if you was locked up and she was alone. That's what was worrying me. I didn't have brains enough to see that if you run you'd be giving color for 'em to pan out."

"As for Patterson, or any one else, I can stand them off," the girl scornfully informed. "I haven't learned to shoot hand-guns and my new Henry rifle for nothing."

Old Idaho seemed to fall into a frenzy. He began yelling:

"But I done it! I tell you I done all they say I did; and more! I got rid of twenty ounces up to Idaho City. I gambled and took my winnings in real dust. My losses was paid with t'other kind. I've hunted for years for my gulch and never could find it. I knew it was near here; but I couldn't find it. It's made me about crazy to know it was close, and yet hid from me same's the mountains are hid by the haze. That's why I made my vegetable farm here. It got on my mind till I couldn't sleep. It made me mad to see other men stumbling onto places that was fortunes, and me not able to find what I'd once tramped over in searching for the lost cattle. It riled me so I got the notion of thinking it wouldn't be very wrong to put out some spelter. I knew the time must come when I could make it all up by handing over genuine dust. I knew other men were doing it—and—and it wouldn't do a bit of harm if the danged fools would keep the make-believe dust a-moving. It's as good as the real article till someone begins to hoot. That proves it wasn't wrong so long as it kept moving. It shows the man who hoots and makes it worth nothing is the one to blame; not me."

This amazing confession left the girl holding her breath. Hale had listened with mouth agape.

"You're making all that up out of whole cloth, granddaddy," whispered the girl when she could speak.

"No! No! No! It's true! We must dig out!" he eagerly replied. "I got so I was losing my wits when I'd go out to find the gulch, could see in my mind just where it was, and then have to come back empty-handed. Git your bundle ready, Harry. I'll clean up something proper and you shall be a lady."

Hale was powerless to express an opinion. It had never entered his imagination to believe Patterson's accusation. He felt a hysterical desire to laugh, to shout, as he recalled how preposterous the gambler's statements had sounded. Nor would he have believed it now if not for the old man's pitiable reasoning that counterfeiting was no offense so long as the bogus article was kept in circulation. The girl slipped on her knees beside him and, resting a hand on his bowed shoulder, pleaded:

"Tell me you don't believe it. He could never make me believe it. He's saying it to make me go with him. He's old and forgets things. He's always been half-crazy to find his Lost Diggings, as he calls them, so he could find dust for me. He isn't selfish. He never did that other thing."

Hale timidly took her small hand and solemnly assured:

"Great snakes, Miss Harry! Any one could see that."

"You were so still, so silent——"

"But what's the use of talking when a man knows you know he's talking bosh. I'm just disgusted with him, that's all."

"I done it, Shoshoni Hale," fiercely insisted the old man. "And I still hold it was good as the real article if every man would pass it along."

"Granddaddy, you've told enough things. You keep quiet. You've disgraced us."

"I done it, and I'll go to Idaho City and tell 'em all that I done it, and that no one can be a loser if they'll just keep passing it along," persisted Idaho.

Withdrawing her hand from Hale's the girl disconsolately sighed, "What's the use! He won't be himself so long as he's thinking of this gulch you've talked of. Why did you have to mention it?"

"Too late to worry of that now," said Hale. "Let's go to this hiding-place, Miss Harry. If we don't he'll be blatting fool-talk up and down the valley and there's men who'll be glad to take him at his word."

"I hate running away! If it was only me concerned. Do you think it's wise for us to leave home and go with you, Shoshoni Hale?"

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"Yes, Miss Harry. It's best. Take your new rifle and some extra blankets. The gulch is sheltered, I reckon; but the nights are bound to be cold. Better pack up some grub, too, although there ought to be game once we git settled and find it's safe to shoot it. Lord! I was forgetting. I've got a friend camped back north of here and I must fetch him along——"

"No strangers can go into that gulch!" wildly protested the old man.

"This one is an Indian. A Shoshoni. He's a friend of mine. He'll come in handy. He won't ask for any gold as he knows he's welcome to all of mine. You've talked enough, Idaho. You and Miss Harry cross the river and follow up stream for ten miles. Then turn south east and make a camp. I'll soon overtake you. My friend will pick up your trail all right if you leave it sort of promiscuous in spots."

"But if you're killed we couldn't ever find the gulch," complained Old Idaho.

"Oh, granddaddy!" rebuked the girl.

"He's right," agreed Hale. "Here! It's marked down on this paper. Reckon I don't need it. I've looked at it enough to remember everything. But Miss Harry must carry it. It mustn't be shown to any one."

"Small chance of our showing it," the girl disconsolately assured.

Hale had in mind the event of Old Idaho's capture by any man from Idaho City. He did not try to explain this, but cautioned:

"Be sure there's no one in sight when you enter. The mouth of the gulch is blocked by a landslide, but close to the wall is a narrow opening. It's masked by grapevines. You can lead the horses in without any trouble. Now I must be off, and good luck."

He was walking back to his horse when the girl overtook him and, touching his arm, tearfully pleaded:

"You don't believe what he said? That he ever did such things?"

"Great snakes! Do you think I'm crazy," he scoffed. "Of course I don't. No sane man would. But there's sane men in Idaho City who'd be glad to pretend they believed it."

"I knew you didn't. And yet—well, it makes me feel better to hear you tell me so. It made me feel queer to hear him say it."

"He's talking bosh, Miss Harry. He's along in years and ain't responsible. Make up your pack and light out. You won't meet no one at this time of night."

He hurried to his horse, anxious for once to leave her. He could not endure further questioning and more falsehoods on his own part. But now Old Idaho pursued him and called on him to halt.

"You'll keep shet about what I said," began the old man in a low voice. "Mebbe it ain't so bad as I've pictered it. Mebbe I wanted to make the little girl go without any fuss. Mebbe——"

"And maybe you're guilty as ——," snarled Hale. "But don't tell the truth about it any more, or I'll turn you over to the vigilants."

With a squawk of fear Old Idaho retreated to the cabin. Hale looked back before riding through the cottonwoods and saw the girl's slight figure by the light of a candle. She was busy with making up the packs. By this time Hale was as thoroughly convinced of Old Idaho's guilt as originally he had believed the charge was preposterous. But the girl must never know the old man was guilty, nor ever suspect that Shoshoni Hale for a moment believed in his guilt.

He rode due north through the sage until he had covered five miles, Pinaquana picking her path through the clumps without hesitation. Hale kept up a low monolog to the mare and she occasionally answered him by trying to nibble at his feet. When he drew rein he was at the foot of long ridge densely timbered with pine and yellow fir. Dismounting, he entered the growth with the mare at his heels. He felt the ground out with his moccasined feet until he found the overflow from a spring. Then he raised his voice in the long howl of a wolf. After waiting for a count of five he repeated the signal. It was answered from up the ridge. Hale removed the saddle and allowed the mare to nose about in the darkness. After a while a low bird note sounded close by. Hale returned it, and the next moment felt the presence of his friend.

CHAPTER VI

DREAMS AND THE AWAKENING

BLACK CLOUD, Hale's Indian friend, did not belong to the Shoshoni band living in Idaho. He came from the Shoshoni band beyond the Rockies and was

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proud of his caste as a "horse and buffalo" Indian. Undoubtedly he felt a contempt for the grass-house people who lived on rabbits, roots, nuts and fish and who in the earlier days had been called "*shoshokos*," or "walkers," because of their lack in horses. Black Cloud had lived in a teepee and naturally scorned the brush shelters of his kinsmen in the sage-brush country.

His crossing the mountains and his lonely life in the foot-hills of the Bitter Root range was a continuous tragedy. He had been good to look upon, said the women of his people; his reputation as a fighting-man was envied by many a warrior of the most warlike of the western tribes. He owned many ponies and although not a chief was accepted as a leader in foray or defensive warfare. In tribal affairs his voice was eagerly listened to; in war he was an example for all ambitious young men.

This before he crossed the mountains. Since coming to the Bitter Root range he had been the last person an Indian would envy.

He had lost his medicine.

He wandered about as one damned, with no thought of material gains. He had lost the medicine which alone could bring him favors from his tutelary deity.

There are many medicines to be had. Some are found, some are secured by trade, some are gifts. There is no hesitancy in discarding a weak medicine or one that once was strong but is no longer potent. There are medicines for trapping and medicines for war. There are grass-root medicines for the cure of the sick and wounded; these are the common property of a tribe. But the medicine Black Cloud had lost was a magic medicine which offset the evil influence of spirits, turned aside the malignant attacks of mythic animals and made futile all efforts put forth by sorcerers in the flesh.

The lost medicine was something he had carried upon his person, a fetish, the symbol and badge of the supernatural power that ever moved at his side, more constant in attendance than his shadow. And no man not even his white friend, knew the nature of that fetish, or what particular god it represented.

Now that it was lost Hale understood his friend felt much as an intensely religious white man would feel if believing he was beyond the Divine compassion. Black Cloud avoided his people. Hale knew he would never return to them unless he could recover the lost symbol. This did not mean the finding of the actual article lost, but something so close to it in resemblance that the Indian mind could accept it as the original.

Or it might mean something entirely different from the lost fetish in outward appearance, but of such transcendant potence as to demand its appropriation by Black Cloud as a satisfactory badge of his guardian spirit.

Hale understood Indians better than most white men. Had he been asked to tell a tenderfoot what it all meant he would, if he told anything, simply describe it as "a frame of mind." Black Cloud lived in hell, and yet he would be lifted into the heavens the moment his mind assured him he had replaced the lost symbol with one equally powerful. The manito the fetish had stood for was either powerless or indifferent and would aid him none. If this bothered the tenderfoot's comprehension Hale might have explained:

"Same as if you worshiped steam. Say the steam boiler in the saw-mill outside of Idaho City. You let the fire go out and your steam-god won't saw out any more lumber. Build a fire and heat the water and he'll work for you. But what happens if you can't find fuel? Your god keeps on sleeping. He won't help you find wood. That's the way it is with the Indian. His god won't help him any."

When they met at the spring Hale's first words was the grave inquiry—

"Has the lost been found, my brother?"

"It is lost. It is deep under the earth or high in the sky," was the answer.

After a suitable period of silence Hale described his difficulties and asked his friend to ride with him to the hidden gulch. Black Cloud replied:

"I know the place. There is much gold there. It is the home of evil spirits. Sometime a bad spirit growls and throws down a mountain. The spirits were angry when white men began to come here. They threw down a mountain and almost closed the mouth of the little valley. The bad spirit will work evil on the first white man to enter the place."

"That man is dead, killed from behind," said Hale, thinking of Lucky Tom.

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"Then my white brother can enter. It is bad to be the first white man to go there."

Hale remembered Old Idaho's assertion that he had been the first to visit the gulch, but he said nothing of it to his friend as it would puzzle the Indian to explain how the old man had escaped disaster. Because of the lateness of the hour and the further fact that the Indian's horse was hobbled a mile away Hale reluctantly decided he must remain at the foot of the ridge and make the journey during the next night. He had no fear about Old Idaho finding the gulch. The old man knew the country well and, aided by the map, he could not overlook the hidden entrance. Doubtless he had passed by the slide many times.

Hale slept till long after sunrise. Black Cloud devoted his time to making two bows and many hunting-arrows. He had gathered from Hale's talk that it would not be wise to use firearms in or about the gulch. The morning was spent in idling by the white man, in making arrows by the red man. After they had eaten the midday meal Black Cloud said—

"There was a black shadow covering the trail behind my brother's feet."

It was his way of asking if there were any news to report concerning the assassins. Early in their friendship Hale had told him of his secret fears.

"The shadow creeps very close. It has touched my heels. Some day I will turn and kick it."

The Indian nodded and moved his hand in the gesture "to kill."

They started in early evening, Black Cloud scouting ahead so as to warn his friend of any danger. When they were within a quarter of a mile of Old Idaho's cabin and about to ford the river Hale was startled to behold a light moving about the log structure. He directed his friend to take the mare and ford the stream and wait for him. Without a word the Indian rode into the water, leading Pinaquana. Retreating to the sage-brush Hale advanced rapidly to the cottonwoods.

The light was now inside the cabin and he could hear low voices. Suddenly the light vanished and a door closed. Hale dropped to the ground. He could hear the men mounting and the horses slowly moving up the river road. One man declared:

"We'll git the old skunk yet. He can't hide up with that girl. He's bound to come back."

"He ain't hiding. He just happens to be away. Nothing's been touched in the cabin. He won't know he's had callers."

Hale thought he recognized this speaker as Sheriff Bowen.

They rode on and Hale was about to go back to the ford when three men came up. He sank back on his heels and laid aside his rifle and drew his revolvers. Between him and the brilliant heavens the three men were silhouettes. They were traveling at a trot to overtake the main body of horsemen and as they passed close to him and gave spur to their mounts one was saying—

"We'll soon be leading him over the rim of the basin."

With a snarl Hale leaped to his feet and fired three times into the darkness where he believed they had disappeared. Under cover of the hoarse shouts and general confusion he ran swiftly to the ford and crossed. The Indian was kneeling on the bank, his rifle ready. The posse was banging away in the sage. Hale had reacted before he knew it. Had there been a second of thought he would have withheld his lead, for at the best he could only trust to luck.

To kill the three men was the great desire of his heart. Their death would remove the black shadow always at his heels and allow him to live openly and without fear among his fellows. Until they were dead he could not humanize his life. But to shoot in the darkness was a weakness. It betrayed to them that some one was trying to slay from ambush even as they had killed Lucky Tom. Had he followed them for a space he might have learned how they called each other; then he could have fully identified them at his convenience. He cursed the impulse that made him shoot.

Had they not spoken the few words which betrayed them to him, had they refrained from saying "over the rim of the basin" he would not have been taken off his guard.

"Do we have a fight?" eagerly asked Black Cloud as his friend mounted the bank.

"No, no!" replied Hale, hurrying from the bank and leaving the desultory firing and angry bawling behind.

"If the medicine was not lost!" muttered the Indian.

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Hale knew his friend yearned to sound his cry of defiance and do battle with the posse, that the absence of his luck fetish alone, perhaps, permitted his being held in restraint.

As they moved south from the river Hale bitterly complained to himself:

"I've missed my big chance! I've thrown it away like a fool. I could have run after them and dogged them along the Placerville road, and they never would have suspected I was at hand. I could have scouted until they came within range of a light; then I'd have learned who they are, those last three. 'Lead me over the rim of the basin' will they? Curse their black hearts! If they'll give me the tenth of a chance I'll take some of 'em with me. Give me half a second for action and they'll never send me over the rim alone as they did poor dad."

"My white brother talks to his medicine," murmured the Indian, deeply impressed. Then mournfully: "Black Cloud can watch the stars. He has no medicine to make a feast for, or to talk to."

Changing their course so as to travel parallel to the river, Hale recovered his composure and briefly explained:

"I shot at a black shadow across the river and scared it. A dozen men are shooting at the sage-brush. I was very foolish. We must ride hard."

"When Black Cloud had his medicine bag around his neck he would not run away. He would ride into the white men and make them race their ponies to escape him. But now Black Cloud can not think. He is like a child in his head. His legs are slow and his arms feeble like those of a root-eating man."

The shouting and firing ceased. The two friends could discover no signs of being pursued. Two hours before sunrise they halted before a hill of broken rock. They dismounted and waited patiently until the light increased and revealed the huge toys of granite, rhyolite, quartzite and limestone which the children of the old gods had fashioned and left strewn around the horizons to worry the feet of pigmies.

This halt was to spare Old Idaho and his daughter any alarm. Hale studied the slide curiously. To all appearance there was solid rock behind the mighty mass of débris. Hale feared his red friend had piloted him wrong; and yet his recollection of Lucky Tom's map demanded this ending to their journey. Black Cloud read the doubt in the frowning brows and said—

"Over there where grape-vines seem to grow against the rock is where we enter."

He pointed to the right where Hale could discern nothing but the solid rock of a high cliff standing deep in the slide.

HALE rose and snapped his fingers to Pinaquana and began picking his way along the edge of the talus. As he neared the cliff his skepticism increased although he knew this was the place indicated in the miner's map. Black Cloud, mounted, passed him and, reaching the cliff, jumped down and pulled a mass of grape-vines one side.

A few feet to the left the cliff shelved in but it was not until Hale entered that he perceived it was the entrance to a long narrow corridor between the concave base of the cliff and the broken rock of the slide.

The narrow passage was dark, but Pinaquana, sent ahead, picked her way with great confidence. Hale stumbled along, holding to her tail, for some two hundred feet, when the mare turned sharply to the right. Directly ahead was a patch of ghostly light, the light of early morning.

Emerging from the entrance Hale stared at the little gulch in amazement. It was scarcely more than a pocket, with a maximum width of not more than a quarter of a mile, and, he estimated a length of less than half a mile. On all sides except at the entrance rose the mountain walls to a height ranging from one to three thousand feet. In the foreground and on his left was the overhanging shoulder of a cliff that seemed to be about to fall and fill the gulch. Black Cloud grunted and muttered—

"Bad medicine in here."

His hand went to his throat where once had hung the rawhide thong secured to the little medicine bag.

"I wouldn't want to sleep under that cliff, old girl," Hale told Pinaquana.

He knew this was a foolish fear for any one tarrying in the gulch; for should the leaning cliff give way one might as well be under it as beneath the opposite wall, as the gulch measured its minimum width at this point.

As he stared, fascinated, at the somber mass of rock a slight form emerged from the thick shadows beneath it, and the next moment the girl Harriet was gliding

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toward them, her Henry rifle half-raised. The Indian raised his hand above his head, palm outward. Hale softly called:

"It's us, Miss Harry. Shoshoni Hale and his friend, Black Cloud."

"Hau!" grunted the Shoshoni.

The girl ducked her head timidly and said to Hale: "Granddaddy's asleep. He nearly killed himself yesterday. It's turned his mind, I think."

"Meaning just what, Miss Harry?" asked Hale as he slipped the saddle and bridle from the mare and turned her loose.

"Oh, the gold," she sighed. "I hate it. We should have stayed at home."

"That's blaming me. The Idaho City sheriff and his gang were at your home last night. Patterson has commenced his game even if he is in jail on a murder charge."

"But granddaddy never did any wrong," she remonstrated.

"Of course not, Miss Harry. And I ain't done anything very bad myself; yet they chase me. If I was a murderer and a thief they'd treat me fine and make me a deputy sheriff and send me out to round up honest people and charge 'em with being law-breakers. But it'll be all right pretty soon."

"I'm worrying more about granddaddy than about what that sheriff will do," she faltered. "He's coming. He's heard us."

She nervously faced the dark recess under the cliff.

"Who be you out there? Speak mighty pert or I'll fire," challenged the trembling voice of Old Idaho.

"It's me, granddaddy. And Mr. Hale and his Indian friend," cried the girl.

Muttering rapidly, Old Idaho came out from under the cliff and joined them. His frosty eyes had no welcome for the newcomers. His first words were:

"Seems to me we're gitting kind of crowded in here. Cal'late on staying long?'

Hale smiled grimly. The girl colored vividly and rebuked:

"For shame, granddaddy! This gulch belongs to Mr. Hale. He told us how to get here. You mustn't talk like that."

The hands holding the long muzzle-loading rifle shook violently as the old man cried:

"Mustn't, eh? I say this is my discovery. I say this is where I chased the lost cattle in 'Forty-five and picked up free gold. That feller that lived here jumped my claim. He blew in my dust. Lord only knows how much of my gold he squandered! I won't be robbed of what's left."

"No one will rob you," soothed Hale. "My friend, Black Cloud, has no use for gold. If there isn't enough for you and me I'll worry along with very little. A posse visited your cabin last night. Let's not quarrel in here. We're all friends."

"A posse come after me, eh?" whispered the old man, dropping the butt of his rifle on the ground and extending a trembling hand to clutch Hale's arm. Then fiercely: "If you know that, then they know you was there and they've followed you! This place, my Lost Diggings, will be filled up with 'em! My girl will be a beggar!"

He gave away to senile emotion and his speech became inarticulate and devoid of meaning.

"No one saw us. No one knows there is such a place as this. If we are careful and build no fire in the daytime no one will stumble upon us in here," soothed Hale.

"If they do they sha'n't live to git outside and spread it!" wildly declared the old man.

With that threat he turned and walked back into the shadows beneath the cliff. Hale followed after him but was bluntly told:

"This is my side of the gulch. You'n' your friend can find lodgings somewheres else."

"Don't be angry with him, Mr. Hale," pleaded the girl.

"I won't if you'll kindly drop the 'mister.' Either Shoshoni Hale, or just Hale."

"He's upset by finding the gold—Shoshoni Hale," the girl continued, her eyes sparkling with tears. "He worked all day taking rock in under the cliff. He seems afraid that he'll lose what he can't tote in there. There's plenty of free gold. There's a spring up the gulch, and around it you can see the gold glistening in the rock that's fallen from the wall. I'll get you something to eat. I cooked last night. You can be looking around."

Hale took this as a hint for him to keep away from the overhanging cliff for awhile. Accompanied by the Indian he explored the gulch for its full length. The upper end terminated against a wall of rock fully three thousand feet high. They found the spring and near it a spring-pole with a

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sledge-hammer attached. Lucky Tom had installed the crude device for pounding the quartz. A natural depression in the rock had been utilized for a mortar as shown by the fragments of rock and specks of gold. Close by the spring was the brush shelter the miner had mentioned. It contained blankets, a water-jug and some sun-dried beef, dried beans and some bacon.

The soft voice of the girl gave the signal for them to return. They found her standing by a slab of rock on which were meat, bread and coffee, all cold. She explained:

"Tonight, when it is dark, I'll cook something hot. I've been talking to granddaddy and he's more reasonable just now. He'd rather you wouldn't go under the ledge, but we'll eat here." The increased light allowed Hale to observe the old man's retreat more minutely. Suddenly he demanded—

"What's those three small kegs hold?"

Before the girl could answer Old Idaho appeared and suddenly answered:

"Powder. Think it was vegetables?"

Hale frowned and commenced eating. After a few minutes he said:

"If that powder should bust loose we'd all be buried. You keep 'em too near the fire. Sparks might blow in there. We'll have to make different arrangements. And this is no place to use powder anyway."

Old Idaho at once was suspicious and asked, "What's your game now? Struck a rich vein that you reckon to prospect with my powder? No, siree!"

"No one wants to use your powder," assured Hale. "And you're not going to use it, either. I won't stand for you burying all of us in this hole. We'll move the powder clear of the cliff."

At first Old Idaho resolutely refused to have the powder moved but after the girl had pictured to him the fearful calamity of blowing up the cliff and filling the gulch he weakened. Danger to their lives would have made no appeal to him, but the possibility of losing the rich diggings filled him with fright. He rolled the kegs out for Hale to take away, and insisted:

"Put 'em where they'll keep dry. The chunks of rock by the spring must have rotted loose from some mighty rich veins, for they're filled with gold. If we could drill in there and set off a blast we'd uncover an eternal fortune."

"Time enough to think of that after we've cleaned up the loose stuff on the ground," said Hale.

With the powder cached Old Idaho began his frantic task of accumulating rocks rich with gold. Hale had no desire to prospect just then and stayed near the flat rock and watched the girl gather up the tin dishes. He insisted on washing them for her in the stream that flowed from the spring but she resolutely refused, saying it was her place to do the squaw work. With the few dishes out of the way there was nothing to do but idle away the hours. Black Cloud wandered up the gulch and Hale said his friend desired to be alone.

After a long silence and a dreamy survey of the blue sky resting on the gulch wall the girl abruptly said—

"I've heard queer stories about you, Shoshoni Hale."

He nodded lazily and continued his play of tossing bits of quartz from hand to hand.

"Not all of them are pleasant," she added.

He slowly dropped the pebbles and stared at her inquiringly. Determined to force him to some expression, she said—

"They say you were outside the law before you came down this way."

He resumed his pebble tossing.

"You don't deny it?" she sharply demanded.

"Bless you, Miss Harry, I never deny anything a young woman wants to believe about me."

"But I don't want to believe it."

"Then don't. Who can make you? 'They say,' and 'I heard,' have done more harm than the redskins ever did. Who's to make you believe wrong of me?"

She colored and puckered her brows and then returned—

"Well, when folks keep on saying a thing——"

"That makes it true, of course," he gravely completed.

"But you do live with Indians," she said.

"I have lived with Indians, both Shoshoni—that's why I'm called that—and the Nez Perces. The last were never known to make holes in their noses despite their name. They're a brave people. Their friendship has always been offered the whites and it's worth having. The Shoshoni are good people, too, if you use 'em right. You'd probably think better of me if I was always killing 'em off."

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"It's queer you don't seem keen to get gold," she mused.

"Ain't it?" he agreed. "And you've said the gold here had turned your grandfather's mind. I suppose you mean there's a middle trail one can take between not wanting any and wanting it all. But I do like gold and I have to have it. Just now I don't feel like panning it out. It's here; no one's going to steal this gulch. No hurry."

She had nothing more to say and after a slight pause left him and went to where her grandfather was feverishly at work. Hale did not seek her company again until late in the evening he received the call for supper. This time the food was hot. After eating he and the Indian returned to near the entrance and spread their blankets. If any one should stumble upon the hidden corridor he would arouse the two sleepers. Before they rolled in their blankets the Indian asked:

"Why is a cloud between my friend and the boy-woman?"

"There is no cloud."

"The evil spirits of this place made me think it."

"I think we'll be leaving here sometime tomorrow, Black Cloud."

"It is good," grunted the Indian.

After the morning meal Hale whistled to Pinaquana and the Indian went after his pony. The girl watched Hale throw on the saddle and then ran to him.

"You'll go out in the daytime?" she asked, her eyes round with astonishment.

"There'll be no danger to you and your grandfather. We shall be very careful," he assured.

"And you won't be back until dark?"

"Why, Miss Harry, I'm reckoning on being gone for quite a bit. When things quiet down and I can be of any help to you two I'll come back."

She dropped cross-legged on the ground and tilting her head looked up at him speculatively. He avoided her gaze. She amazed him by saying:

"I think it was mighty fine when you wouldn't say you was not guilty of all the fool things folks might say about you. I'm glad, Shoshoni Hale, that you wouldn't bother to talk about it. I reckon I must be very young to talk as I did. Why, if you'd taken the trouble to tell me you never done the things some loose-tongued people say you've done it would be like spending your time trying to find color in a pan of salmonberries."

Hale suspended his work and in great bewilderment stared down into her upturned face.

"I reckoned from the way you talked yesterday and the way you left me all of a sudden that you'd feel freer, as if you had more room, if Black Cloud and me hit an outside trail."

She laughed as if heartily amused.

"Did I fool you as good as that? Then I'm sorry I tried it. Take that saddle off Pinaquana. The poor thing wants to run and roll."

"I don't go to bother any one," he muttered, his hands resting on the saddle.

"And you don't go to leave me alone and afraid," she said. "Why, I couldn't bear to stay here with granddaddy and him that notional."

"If I thought I could be of any service," he said, his gray-green eyes staring up the gulch after the Indian.

"Then that's settled," she exclaimed, jumping to her feet and beginning to remove the saddle. Without a word he completed the task and sent the mare galloping up the gulch.

"Black Cloud will think I'm a fool to change my mind so easy," he mumbled.

"Tell him I asked you to stay," she urged.

"Oh, he won't speak of it. When he sees the mare he'll know I've changed my mind and he'll leave me to guess what he's thinking."

THEN began what for Hale at least was an idyllic existence. While Old Idaho labored early and late to add to his stock of gold Hale walked and talked with the girl. From viewing her as being a mischievous child he discovered her mental qualities made her his teacher in many things. His life had been direct and objective and had contained none of the softening influences which permit of fanciful speculations.

She opened his mind to a keener appreciation of the glories of nature. Her love for the morning and evening lights gave him a new viewpoint. He had always considered the purple haze as a material obstruction to the vision. Under her tutelage he learned it was a curtain between him and fairyland. The illusory

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world behind the veil became very real as she translated mountain-peaks and ridges into giants' castles and homes of princesses.

To steal through the long corridor and from behind the grape-vines watch the appearance and vanishing of mountain-top and graven slope was a rare adventure. Every day a new world was created and exposed to their gaze and then hidden away; and her soft voice artlessly giving word pictures of her impressions fed an unsuspected soul hunger in him.

So she became the teacher and he the pupil. He had said he never had been a boy; now he was very boyish, as he sprawled at full length at her feet and listened to the stories woven out of the purple and violet shades, out of the coming and going of the sculptured heights. She fed the empty places of his soul which should have been satisfied when he was younger.

He translated some of her imagery to Black Cloud, who unhesitatingly accepted them as logical causations for various phenomena. The Indian took to watching the child-woman as one who is gifted with mystery-medicine.

At night, from the same hiding-place, she allowed her fancies to make free with the velvet darkness and the brilliant dome of the dust-free sky. Black Cloud said the domed firmament was made of ice and that when the serpent god scraped his rough back against it the earth had rain or snow, and that the rainbow was the colors of the god. She readily accepted this explanation and proceeded to embroider it with her own quaint notions, and won the Indian to several colorful amendments until it was doubtful whether he remained orthodox.

"She is very big medicine-woman," he gutturally informed Hale one night. "She sees the teepees of my people, who lived many Winters ago. She is The-woman-who-can-look-backwards into the past. She says the early light lets us look into the spirit land. Last night she called me to see the snake god run along the top of the mountains. Never before has he left the sky."

He referred to the twilight period, when the shadows filled the plains and crept up the distant heights and engulfed all in darkness except the serrate crest, which, still glorified by the sun, became an undulating line of fire.

"I'll follow her game and play it with a copper," declared Hale in English, addressing himself rather than the Indian. "She has everything beat I ever heard tell of. She give me the shivers when she said there were things, very strange and pretty, close by us all the time if we had eyes sharp enough to see 'em. And then her reckoning Pinaquana could see things I never saw; that dogs could do the same. Course it's her play, but how's one to tell when she's making up things and when she's in earnest?"

As one result of the girl's fanciful flights Black Cloud to a certain degree forgot his dislike of the gulch. Possibly he reasoned that the girl's medicine offset the baneful influence of the local spirits.

Old Idaho continued to pick up the rich rock, or wash out from thirty to sixty dollars' worth of gold from each pan of gravel. Now and then Hale would be very busy searching for small nuggets, but so sure as the girl went a-wandering he dropped prospecting to join her. And when she walked away from the overhanging cliff Black Cloud followed. Unless she called him to her he kept back a score of yards. And always his bearing was that of a man overawed. One day he told Hale:

"She has been touched by the biggest medicine. Her eyes see beyond the snake god in the sky. She can look down into the earth very deep. She tells Black Cloud that the Big Mystery is trying to tell his white and red children what everything means, and is using for his sign-language the going-to-sleep and the waking-up of the sun. Many times, my white brother, we have watched the sun crawl out on top of the Bitter Root range, but never twice did we see the sky look just the same. So now I know why the Big Mystery uses so many paints when the sun goes to sleep or throws aside his cloud blankets in the morning. When we know why he uses the different paints we can read his signs; then we will know everything—and I will find my medicine."

At the first opportunity Hale cautioned the girl:

"Better be a bit careful, Miss Harry, how you fill the Indian up with fairy stories. He now reckons you have a big sun medicine and can help him find his lost medicine."

"His medicine is what he thinks it is, Shoshoni," she calmly replied. "He could

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never lose it if he believed he had not lost it."

Hale mulled this over and with a shake of his head said:

"I just can't make sense out of that, Miss Harry. He either lost it, or he didn't lose it. And I'll swear no medicine-bag has hung around his neck since he came west of the Rockies."

"Another bag would hold his medicine just as much as the lost bag did if he only thought so," she serenely replied. "I think I'll make him up one and say it's filled with star dust."

"He'd open it. You can't fool him," Hale warned.

"I don't want to fool him. I want to help him. I'm sorry for him. He'll not be happy till he believes he has his medicine back. His lost medicine had something to do with the stars I know. He's always watching them at night."

"You can't fool that Indian, Miss Harry. You'd best keep clear of any plan to give him a medicine. It's mighty serious business to him."

"Of course it is. It's serious to us when we reckon things are going wrong and we haven't any luck. I'll tell him the last sunset told me that the star-dust will melt and become nothing if he ever opens the bag."

Hale whistled softly and stared at her with unbounded admiration. Then he sternly said:

"It won't do. You mustn't try it. It would be most dangerous let alone cheating."

The last reflected a slight leaning toward a belief in the supernatural induced by his lonely life in the mountains and his long acquaintance with the red men.

"How cheating?" she sharply demanded; and he knew she was displeased. "A warrior is sick, and a grass-root medicine man offers to cure him for a copper kettle. He pretends to take pieces of iron and some pebbles from the sick man and then tells him he's all well. Many times the warrior gets up and reckons he *is* well. Who worked the cure? The grass-root man, or the sick man himself? His medicine is what he believes.

"You and I know, Shoshoni, that the bag he wore around his neck could never help him when he was sick or help him in war. It was probably filled with bits of colored glass and a colored feather. But the things the trash stood for—the rainbow, the stars, or whatever it was—and his belief in those things made him very brave and, of course, respected. You meet Patterson. You believe your guns are loaded. You're not afraid of him. But if you believed they were not loaded you'd feel different."

"Rake in the pot. You win. But no experiments with his medicine."

"It's just like your notion that some one is going to shoot you from the dark, or strike you down from behind," she ran on, inspired to be bold because of his obvious homage. "You've run from the fear ever since you was a boy, so you say. But you never got away from it. Black Cloud says it's a black shadow, always right at your heels."

"There's no mistake about what's after me," was the grim reply. "I had a sample of how real it is when Lucky Tom was killed. His murderers were at your cabin and I heard their threats and was fool enough to show my hand by banging away at them in the dark."

"Oh, I suppose something or other is after us all the time," she sighed. "If it is, it is; and it can't be helped. But if we turn and face it, it sometimes kicks up its heels and runs away."

"But what if you can never see it when you turn around?" he asked, his voice edged with exasperation.

"Then the chances are it isn't there. Only shadows. It was there when it killed poor Lucky Tom? Yes. But all these years you've been hiding up in the mountains it wasn't there. Yet never a day but what you felt it at your shoulder. Shadows! I reckon, Shoshoni, you've done most of your running from something that was on your mind, not on your trail."

"All right," he glumly said. "Nothing will satisfy you that I ain't a coward till I go back to town and git shot up when I ain't looking in the right direction."

"Shoshoni Hale, you're trying to make me feel bad. And you're coming too mighty close to it for you to say much more."

"Miss Harry, I feel that way toward you that I'd rather be dead with a Danite knife through my throat than to have you reckon I'm scared of my shadow."

"Danites!" she whispered, her hand on his wrist, her eyes wild with fright.

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"They killed my father," he explained. "I was sixteen at the time. My father joined them. In 'Fifty-nine he tried to escape to the Upper Country, as they then called Idaho. We two started north. We almost made the Snake River when they jumped our camp one night. Came in out of the darkness. I was after a stray horse in the bush. I heard the shots. I yelled for two reasons: I was scared, and I had a notion that if they heard me they'd run after me and leave my father alone. They did run to find me and I circled back and saw my father for a minute before he died. He told me to change my name and to keep away from them, that they would hunt for me wherever I was, for his fault was such as to call for the killing of his people, root and branch. I was the only one left for them to kill. But as you say it's high time I quit running from shadows."

"Promise me you won't let my silly talk make you act reckless," she begged of him, her face frightened. "You mustn't leave here. Who would I talk to? Granddaddy would drive me crazy with his queer actions. Aren't you happy here?"

"Very happy, Miss Harry. But a man must work. We can't always stay here; it's too pleasant. Queer that one usually has to quit doing the thing he likes to do."

"Promise me, Shoshoni, you won't be rash and run into danger," she pleaded. "A girl's foolish talk wouldn't make you do that, would it?"

"You ain't talked any foolishness that I've heard. But as to danger I don't reckon to do anything that'll send me over the rim of the basin. So don't you fret."

The subject was dropped and their companionship continued on the old impersonal plane of fairy stories, quaint speculations, with the girl equaling any red man in supplying a cause for any unusual effect. Her whimsicalities were accepted by Black Cloud as being the gospel of nature. But now that the Indian undertook to supply game Hale and the girl were more alone.

With his bow and arrows Black Cloud stole from the gulch and brought in rabbits. Once he ventured north to the river and secured wild ducks, making the return at night. Once he killed a deer. He also secured a generous supply of camas roots, the Indian's bread and potato.

For his personal enjoyment he often ate the quallah root, of disagreeable flavor and tasting like tobacco and supposed to be poisonous when eaten raw. Blackberries and grapes were abundant, the latter to be had at the mouth of the gulch. He also filled bark dishes with gooseberries.

Hale had been superlatively happy up to the time he and the girl talked about the Indian's lost medicine and she, with the bluntness of the inexperienced but precocious, had assumed to correct his line of thought. With black care no longer dogging him, with the company of a glorious girl to bless him, he asked nothing more of heaven and earth. After her immature wisdom impelled her to advise him in what he had supposed to be purely a man's game his happiness became streaked with misery and shame.

When alone he would proceed to the extremity of declaring himself to be a coward. She had as good as said that he was running away from a shadow; undoubtedly she believed he was afraid to play a game where he must die if he lost. Then she would come running to him and while he could lounge at her side he would forget his trouble. The fact that she avoided further reference to his enemies induced him to spells of brooding. He was careful to conceal his melancholy from her, for he disliked scenes. Several nights after their talk he spoke to her grandfather at some length.

On returning to the fire-hole, where glowed a bed of coals, he announced:

"I must go outside tonight, Miss Harry. Black Cloud will stay here with you."

"Go outside, Shoshoni?" she repeated. "I don't understand."

"It's on your granddaddy's business. It's very simple and yet very important," he lightly explained.

"But how can that be?" she suspiciously demanded. "We left everything when we came here. Either the cabin stands, or has been burned. What business have you to go out tonight—and you a hunted man?"

"He has some specimens stacked up in the hills a few miles from the house. If they're found by that Idaho City gang they'd pretend he was grinding the specimens into bogus gold-dust. Every man takes samples of ore and pounds 'em up so's to find out what he has. That's the miner's daily life. But Patterson and his gang would pounce upon your granddaddy's specimens to prove he's a counterfeiter."

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"There isn't one chance in a million of those men finding his samples. He didn't bring any to the cabin."

"We don't want to take even the shadow of a chance. There's no danger in it for me. It's night. I have the valley all to myself. By this time my enemies think I'm up in the Kootenai country. Just keep the Cloud interested with your fairy stories and I'll be back before you know it."

"But why not send the Indian, or at least take him with you?" she protested, instinct warning her something was brewing that she never would approve of.

"Pinaquana doesn't seem quite herself and I'm taking the Cloud's pony. It's a one-man job. Don't worry your pretty head."

"What!" she gasped, and the glow from the coals seemed to transfigure her face.

It needed no firelight to redden his face. It was the first hint at a compliment. He faltered:

"Just a way of talking, Miss Harry. No harm meant."

"Say it again," she commanded.

"I asked you not to worry your pretty head."

"Do you think it's pretty?" she eagerly cried.

"Of course. All young women are pretty," he awkwardly answered.

"Oh!"

She walked toward the recess where her grandfather was resting on his blankets and Hale took advantage of her absence to hurry through the corridor and through the grape-vine curtain where Black Cloud stood waiting beside the pony. Hale was hurt that she should so suddenly lose interest in his going. She had not even bid him good-by, or wished him luck.

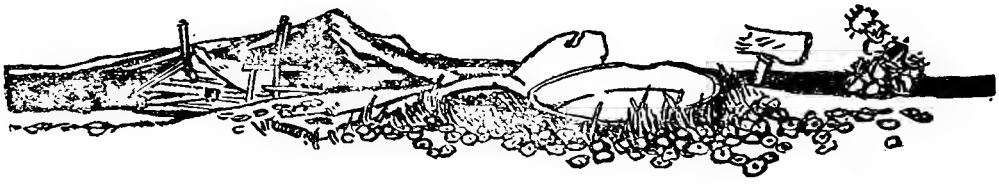
What he did not know was that the slim figure passed through the grape-vines and was following him on foot until the Indian overtook her in the darkness and compelled her to return to the gulch. Thus trifles had worked on Hale's mind until he was wallowing in misery.

He knew only one cure for it, and he looked hungrily ahead to his true errand outside the gulch. Four miles from the river he entered between two low hills and led his horse up the bed of a little creek. There was enough water in pools to wet his moccasins and thereby guide his feet. At last his feet encountered a mound of dirt, and he hobbled the pony and gathered dry twigs and lighted a fire.

As fuel was added the flames lighted the small hollow and revealed a crude mill, worked by horsepower. Beside the mill were several crucibles. The crucibles he smashed and threw on the roaring fire. The mill was next assailed and dismantled bit by bit and added to the flames. Hale displayed no desire for secrecy. His mood welcomed an intrusion; but as he labored he did not neglect to listen occasionally. He was not disturbed, however. To further conceal the site of the mill he piled fuel on it and started a second fire. Satisfied that this evidence would never be counted against the old man he led the pony down the creek bed.

The night was yet early and his work so far as it concerned Old Idaho, was finished. His major errand, the one he had kept concealed from the girl, remained. He impatiently made for the river road, and on reaching it rode northeast at top speed. Early morning found him hidden outside of Placerville and soundly asleep.

TO BE CONTINUED



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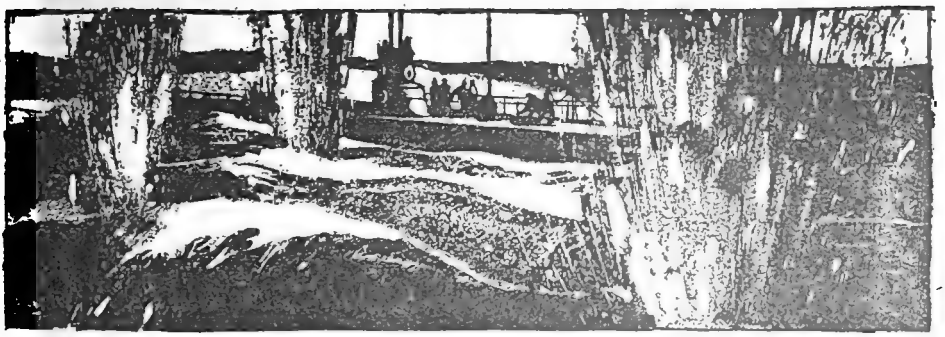

"NO FIGHTIN' MAN"

by Thomas F. Barnett

PINKEY ROSS sat on an upturned bucket and feasted his eyes on the picture the setting sun had painted behind the Statue of Liberty. The old Liberty Girl stood at the end of a gleaming crimson road, looming sharply against a background of bold, sweeping colors. The black outlines of harbor ferries crept quietly back and forth across the shining water; the whole busy harbor seemed hushed, just standing still taking it in, like me and Pinkey.

One by one the lights twinkled out on the Jersey shore. High overhead against the clear blue sky droned a belated hydroplane, like a homing pigeon, headed straight for his roost in Tompkinsville.

Not a word had been spoken for the last ten minutes. "Dog-face" Donovan, who appreciated a beautiful sunset about like a deaf mute does Caruso, was propped against a ventilator with his nose buried in the sporting page of a newspaper.

"I see Kid Olson quit cold in the scrap last night," he observed. "And I had five bucks on that dirty Swede. Well, it serves me right," he added, "for betting against an Irishman.

"That's the way with a Swede" he went on. "Get him in a tight place and he'll show yellow every time. He had it all over Young Murphy; speed, skill—everything. And he ought to have won by a mile, but this Murphy kid packs a mean wallop and ain't afraid to take a licking; so when the Swede saw he couldn't knock him out he started hunting for a soft place to flop."

Pinkey rolled a cigaret and bummed me for a match. He lit up, drew deeply and exhaled a cloud of smoke through his freckled nose.

"Well, I'll tell yuh," he began, "this question relatin' to the color scheme of spinal columns of any particular race or individual sure covers a big territory."

"Yeh?" I replied encouragingly.

Having been shipmates with Pinkey on the Asiatic Station in the good old days, I knew from previous observations that when he had just finished absorbing a beautiful sunset, or any of the other wonders of nature, he was in prime condition for a good yarn. He paused and took a long squint at the picture before us.

"I've seen fellows before now that you'd think was game to the core let some measly little runt hand them an awful razzin', and get away with it. And the very next day knock the spots outa some guy that looked like a meat fed bulldog just because he looked cock-eyed at them.

"As a rule, the birds who have the most gab are supposed to get cold feet when action takes place, but I've seen some of these big-mouthed *hombres* that would rather fight than eat. And the quiet, soft spoken, easy going bird is supposed to be a ragin' demon when he's properly het up. I've seen some that was, and some that wasn't. They come all kind o' ways.

"Some guys just naturally have certain other guys' numbers, regardless of size or pugilistic ability. The longer I live the fewer convictions I have on the whole

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subject. But there's one thing I know for sure: You can never tell beforehand just what a man will do when the big showdown comes—nor neither can he, for that matter.

"A man can act like most anything till that time comes. But when he stands on his own two feet and sees the old bird with the scythe aiming a swing at him, he's pretty likely to act just what he is. And it's my opinion that when this time comes, nine out of ten men will look the old gent square in the eye and cash in feet first with his boots on, like a he man ought to.

"Men, take 'em as they come, are the gamest animals on earth. After all, fellers, that's the only fit way to croak, and when my time comes, I hope I'll go out like that."

While expounding these noble gems of philosophy Pinkey's cigaret went out. He bummed me for another match and lit up again.

Now, whenever Pinkey began getting stuff like this off his chest I knew a yarn was brewing that would be worth listening to, so I settled back comfortably against the chart house and waited for him to proceed.

It was. So I'll just pass it along as Pinkey spun it to me. . . .

THERE'S one guy I always remember when I hear anything said about a Swede being yellow. You remember, Bill, along back in 1918 when I got rousted out o' my old billet on the "Arky" and transferred to that crusty little bumboat, the *Lake Platte?* Well, we were loadin' mines up the creek at Norfolk when this Swede I'm tellin' you about comes aboard.

I was shining bright-work on the bridge when I first saw him come drillin' down the dock with his bag and hammick perched on his shoulder. He climbs up the gangway and deposits his load on the deck as light as a bag o' feathers.

There was something about the big, broad-chested, upstandin' way of him that took my eye right at the start. He was clean as a pin and he wore his uniform like a sailorman. The O. D. looked over his papers and sent him to the ship's writer. I saw no more of him until chow call sounded, about an hour later.

I dived below and found the Swede seated near the end of the table, in a billet usually infested by a hard-boiled Polak with a name like the Russian battle front. Nobody ever attempted to pronounce it. They simply called him "The Polak"—usually preceded by a string of highly decorative adjectives. Likewise the Swede, whose name was Christianson, came to be known simply as "The Swede."

You know how names are in the outfit. About the only place they are ever used is on the payroll and the liberty list.

We were about half way through when the Polak, who was supposed to be ashore, comes rumblin' in. He takes one squint at the Swede and lets out a squawk.

"Hey, you! How the —— d'ye get that way? Git t' —— outa my billet."

I looked up to see how the Swede was going to take it. I hoped he'd knock the Polak loose from his toenails. If my size had been any ways near equal to my inclinations on the matter, I'd 'a' made dog meat out o' him long ago.

The Swede looked around kinda timid like and got right up and eased off without saying a word. Gee, I sure was disappointed, for somehow I'd sized that Swede up for a scrapper, but I had to admit he certainly wasn't living up to my expectations.

"Come on, snap outa it, and get me some chow," howled the big goulash hound.

Gallagher, being a mess cook, and therefore immune from attack, directed the Polak just where to go in very explicit terms, and after exchanging the usual uncomplimentary remarks, departed for the galley to rustle the required chow.

We finished loading next day and was towed to our anchorage in the Roads to wait for the convoy to make up. At sunup next morning the old *Lake Platte* hauled up her mud hook, turned her flat nose toward the east and trailed past Cape Henry behind about thirty freighters and tankers bound for Scotland.

The Swede, who turned out to be a gun pointer, was assigned to the piece of gas pipe that occupied the after gun platform, and was officially designated by the Bureau of Ordnance as "one 5 inch B.L.R., Mk. IV., Model 1903," to replace Jimmy Dale, who had been transferred to the hospital with the flu.

He turned to on that old hunk o' rust, and shined and polished her till she looked like a new tin lizzie. The gunner's mate,

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who should have done this work, saw the Swede was nuts about the old sister, so he took things easy and passed the buck.

The chief boats'n's mate, a thick skulled Dutchman, who hadn't any too much backbone, found the Swede wouldn't give him an argument when ordered to turn to. Consequently, the Swede fell heir to all the nasty jobs around the ship. The Polak took to raggin' the Swede more and more as the days wore on and the big mule just took it with never a comeback.

Right after the first pay day at sea a merry little crap game sprung up in the after quarters. The Polak was having a run of hard luck. Wee Willie Jones, the demon ink slinger, had possession of the bones and was going through the Polak like a coal heaver through a Christmas dinner.

"Bite him, little dice," commanded Willie, as he rolled out a seven.

"Now, once more little playmates."

"Wow! Little Josephus."

"A gang of deuces! Shoot the works," said Willie. "Snake eyes, don't be there."

He massaged the ivories between his mitts.

"Bite 'im again, little dogs," he pleaded as the tidings of disaster hopped nimbly across the blanket and came to parade rest with a five and six top side up. "Do we reap the frog skins, little bones? You tell 'em," said Willie as he raked in his winnings.

The Polak was sweating blood. He didn't mind losing a nickel any more than the Kaiser did the war. He swells up and glares around him. The Swede happened to be sitting on a ditty box directly behind him.

"No wonder I can't have any luck," he snarled, "with that —— big Jonah settin' behind me. Get out, you big goof, or I'll poke you in the jaw."

And —— if that big lemon didn't get up and beat it without a word.

Me and Darby was having a little game of Acey-Deucy at the time.

"Well, what do you know about a guy that'll take the like o' that without a comeback?" says he.

"Maybe you wanta take it up," challenged the Polak, rising to his feet and glarin' down at Darby. Now Darby was one of these soft spoken, easy going birds that runs true to form.

"Start something, you scum," yowled the Polak.

I'll say he started something. He got up and landed a wallop on the Polak's jaw that knocked him clean into the hammick netting. The Polak, for all his big mouth, was full of fight. He charged back like a wild bull. Darby glided sideways and flashed in an uppercut that sent the Polak's head back with a snap.

Before he could recover Darby followed it up with a couple of stiff jabs to the wind. As the Polak staggered back a right hook whizzed past his chin like a bullet.

The Polak's size and reach were much in his favor, but it was plain that Darby had him outclassed. Man, that boy shook a wicked fist. The Polak swung a wild haymaker, but Darby wasn't there. He was everywhere else—and all at the same time.

He stepped inside the Polak's guard and launched a salvo of lefts and rights to his wind, finishing it off with another one of those lightnin' hooks. This time it connected neatly with the point of the Polak's jaw. He went down like a brick house.

Man, I was so happy I had to lean up against a stanchion for support. I'd just been prayin' that this very little thing would happen to that big thick head. The big stiff was plainly licked, but at that he was game enough to get up and come back for more.

Darby planted a solid left square in his face and followed it up with a slam that sounded like a butcher chopping up a cow. He hit the Polak three times while he was falling.

I was tickled to death to see that guy get what was coming to him, but I sure did hate to see the Swede show yellow that way, he was such a likable sort of a fellow. I met him on deck later and thought I'd slip him a bit of advice.

"Say, Swede," I says, "why didn't you take a poke at that Polak? Give him some of what Darby did. Even if you don't lick him, though the Lord knows you're big enough, he'll lay off you. He never picks a fight with a guy he knows'll fight back. Just watch him steer clear of Darby from now on."

"I dunno, Pinkey, I just ain't no fightin' man," he says.

"——, you ain't got nothin' on me," I tells him, "I get licked four out of every five times."

I can see that he knows what I'm tellin' him is straight dope, and feels meaner'n a

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snake for not doing it, and somehow, in spite of the fact that he'd showed a streak of yellow a mile wide, I felt sorry for him. But my good advice was all wasted; for the next day the boats'n's mate, Polak, and all hands was razzing him same as ever.

Well, even a seagoin' bath tub like the *Lake Platte* will reach the other side eventually—if her engine keeps turning over, and she stays afloat. So, on the twenty-first day we pulls into Kyle. After unloading our mines we drops down to Glasgow for coal and supplies.

Here all hands go ashore and proceed to indulge in the usual celebrations, consisting mainly of gettin' properly lickered up on Scotch whisky and advancing on Mary Hill where our little British playmates were accustomed to entertain us in a free-for-all fight that was liberal in the extreme.

The Swede steers clear of both, however, and spends his time sightseein' and collecting souvenirs.

We finished our coaling and dropped down the Clyde, past Haystack Rock, creeps around the North of Ireland and heads for home.

By this time it was getting on toward the last of October and the subs were giving us their full attention. It came about three days later, on the four to eight watch, just at daylight—with a sea like a millpond. Moore, the gunnery officer, who had the deck, was pacing back and forth on the wing of the bridge, stopping occasionally to take a squint around the horizon through his glasses, turned to me and said:

"Ross, when you go aft to read the log warn the men on watch back there to keep a bright lookout. This is an ideal morning for a sub."

I trotted aft and found the Swede on watch on the gun platform.

"How's she steamin', Swede?" I greets him.

"Fine, Pinkey, fine," he replies. "Great mornin' for a sub."

"Yeh, the O. D. says keep a bright lookout," I tells him, wonderin' what a *hombre* with a jelly backbone like him would do if a sub should happen to pop up. I didn't have long to wonder, for just as I was climbin' up the ladder to the bridge the Swede called out—

"'Hoy on the bridge."

I answers him and he yells back—"Dark object on the horizon."

"Where away?" sung out Moore.

"On the port quarter, sir."

Moore focused his glasses on the spot and I reached into the chart house and grabbed my old Q. M. glass. I aimed her on the port quarter and swept the horizon. I picked up the object and recognized it at once for the conning tower of a sub steaming on the surface.

"There she is, Ross," announced the O. D. as he skipped into the chart house and sounded the general alarm.

The gang came tumbling out of the deck houses and quarters aft and swarmed up the ladders to their stations. I glanced aft and noticed that the Swede had the gun cover off and was training the old relic around on the sub.

The skipper took the bridge and Moore went aft to the gun. Every man was right on his station—all set, and it didn't take no lengthy explanation to make the crew realize just what was coming off.

"Fire at will, Mr. Moore," the skipper called through his megaphone. I heard Moore give the order:

"Range nine thousand; scale five one; fire when you're on." A second later the old gun roared.

I watched for the splash and saw it was a good five hundred yards short. Nine thousand yards was her maximum range—according to the guy that engraved the little jiggers in her sight—but that was back in 1903 when she was in her prime.

An instant later I saw a flash from the sub and heard a shell coming our way. It went moaning a good hundred feet overhead and exploded fifty yards beyond.

"Huh, shrapnel is it?" observes the skipper, cool as an ice wagon. Now, ordinarily I ain't no pessimist, but it don't take no kind of a mathematician to figure out that the Dutchman's got us beat about forty ways for range. Whether he can hit anything or not remained to be seen; but it's a lead pipe cinch that as long as he doesn't come any closer we won't be able to inconvenience him any. The Swede let fly again and the Dutchman replies with another wad o' shrapnel, which explodes too high. The song them fragments was singin' when they passed overhead didn't have no charm for me a-tall.

"Is your gun elevated up to the limited, Mr. Moore?" called the skipper.

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"Yes sir, but we won't be able to reach her unless she comes closer."

If the Swede was sufferin' from palpitation of the spine there wasn't any signs of it. And right here he pulls a stunt which proves that he wasn't rattled any. After several rounds had fallen short he begins to take advantage of the slight following sea. As the stern rose in the air he would wait till she got to the highest and then fire. Course this throwed his sights off, as he had the gun jacked up to the limit, but it gave him that much needed increase in range.

The shells began to drop mighty close to the sub. Mr. Heinie promptly drops back another hundred yards or so and we're just as bad off as we were before. I'll tell you, Bill, it sure makes a fellow feel sore to know that he hasn't got a chance, and that dirty cuss could just lay off there and hammer —— out of us.

The gun crew was working like a machine, but we might as well have been shootin' at the moon for all the good it was doin' us. The sub had our range now and shrapnel began to rain on the steel decks. One of the boats had a big hole knocked in it. Another hunk hit the spud locker and vegetables rolled all over the boat deck.

I saw Wee Willie's head snap back and he flopped flat on his back, his face a bloody mass. Darby, in the act of shoving a shell in the breech, stopped and sank to his knees with the shell still gripped in his arms.

He tried to rise, still holding on to the shell, but toppled over and lay still. Doc, the Pharmacist's Mate, turned from the still form of Wee Willie and began ripping Darby's jumper off.

——! When I saw Darby go down, everything went red. I simply jumped up and down on the bridge and howled. Man, I was wild—and we couldn't get back at them.

The skipper was gripping the rail like a hawk.

"My ——! If we could only reach the bloody devils," he groaned. He turned to me. "Ross, it's all up. Run up the signal. I can't see my men butchered like this. Cease firing, Mr. Moore," he called aft.

I've been shaking the old buntin' a long time, but I never thought I'd ever have to run up that hoist. The sub ceased firing and began to draw closer.

"Stand by to abandon ship," the skipper ordered.

The crew mustered on the boat deck, helping the wounded along. Darby was on a stretcher, unconscious, but still alive. The shrapnel had torn a bad hole in his side. Moore had spread the lowered colors over the dead body of Wee Willie.

"Men," the skipper addressed us, "I hate like —— to haul down the flag to that dirty hound, but there's nothing else for us to do."

"If you say the word, sir, we'll stick and have it out," said Moore. The gang, to a man, voiced their approval of these sentiments.

"It's no use. You've acquitted yourselves like men and American seamen. Lower away the boats."

As the boats were being lowered, I saw the Swede disappear down a ladder leading aft. I thought he was only going for some little keepsake he didn't want to leave behind. We threw the two large life rafts overboard so we'd have something to swim to in case the Germans shelled the boats—which we fully expected them to do.

The two whaleboats that had escaped the shrapnel, and the motor dory held us comfortably. We hooked on to the dory and pulled away from the side.

Meantime the sub came up and launched a tiny rowboat with three men. They didn't intend to waste a torpedo on her. The three climbed up the sea ladder dangling over the side and hauled up an ugly looking bomb. We watched them disappear down the engine room hatch.

The sub steamed slowly around the old *Lake Platte*. The crew gathered around the conning tower giving her the once over. The old gun on the stern was still elevated up and trained aft, just as we had left her when we ceased firing. As the sub slowly rounded the stern of the *Lake Platte* somebody suddenly exclaimed:

"Look! Look at that."

I looked just in time to see a man leap from behind the shell box on the gun platform and frantically spin the hand wheel on the gun.

It was the Swede!

The Huns saw him and sprang to their gun and began training around on the *Lake Platte*. The muzzle of the Swede's gun descended rapidly. A rifle cracked on the deck of the sub and a bullet plowed through the Swede's shoulder.

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He staggered back, knocked loose from his gun, but recovered himself and clawed at the wheel. Down came the muzzle another six inches, and the old gun roared out point blank at the sub. The shell struck solid at the base of the conning tower and the whole works went up in a shower.

We let out a yell and pulled for the ship. The three bomb experts, hearing the gunfire, came flying up out of the engine room.

The Swede saw them and ducked down a ventilator on the gun platform, which led to the shaft alley below, just in time to escape a bullet from the first man's Luger.

We reached the side and scrambled up the sea ladder just as the last Hun disappeared down the ventilator. Part of the gang ran aft and the rest of us piled down the engine room hatch. I happened to be one of the first to reach the floor below.

There leaning against the bulkhead beside the narrow opening of the shaft alley, a wrench gripped in his hand, was the Swede. Hun number one lay sprawled on his face at the Swede's feet, his head caved in by the wrench. The other two, back in the shaft alley, could see what had happened to their mate and were taking no chances on that wrench. The Swede looked around at us kinda dazed like, then he slid down the bulkhead in a heap.

A week later Doc announced that Darby was out of danger, and the Swede was able to sit propped up in a chair on deck. I came over to where he was sittin', feeling pretty mean inside.

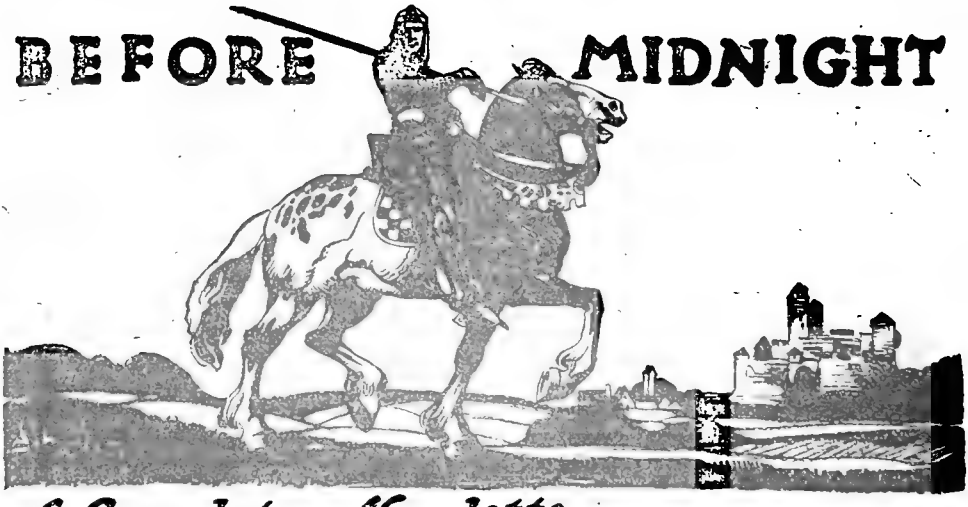
"Swede," I says, "I want to apologize for some of the things I've been thinking about you."

"Aw forget it, Pinkey, ol'-timer. That was nothing. I just kept thinking about that shell we left in the gun when we ceased firing, and I knew the sub would likely steam around our stern, like they generally do. The rest was easy."

He paused a minute and then went on—

"I know I'd orta slammed that Polak, but somehow—I just ain't no fightin' man."

BEFORE MIDNIGHT



A Complete Novelette

by Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur

Author of "The Ace of Diamonds," "Fisherman's Luck," etc.

PIERRE obeyed his master's summons with a little quickening of the heart, which he could not explain. Certainly there was nothing to provoke excitement in the mere fact that the Count of Toulouse had sent for him; Pierre was frequently the count's companion. Nor did he know of anything that had happened to disturb the monotonous luxury of his life in the castle. Very little had happened for many months, and Pierre was weary of hunting and hawking, of reading romances to the countess, of the hours of catapult practise and cavalry

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evolutions that kept the garrison ready for an imaginary enemy. It was the year of grace 1145; a peaceful year, and therefore a dull one to men bred to the sword. It was very dull to Pierre, who was just turned twenty-six, and hungry for glory.

He found Count Alphonse on the new terrace, which had been constructed just outside the postern of the citadel, and presented vivid proof of that peace which Pierre found so wearisome. Even in its many wars, Toulouse had not seen an enemy inside the outer fortifications; and now the entire absence of trouble had induced Alphonse-Jourdain to build this terrace for his countess. It was a wide, gently rolling lawn of velvet grass, on the very brow of the hill which the castle crowned with a coronet of stone. A fountain, which kept the grass lush and thick, also watered a hedge of roses, still faintly fragrant with a few belated blooms, and an arbor of grapes that would soon be purple.

Below, its lights starring the soft southern night, lay the great city of Toulouse, silver-girdled by the Garonne, armored with towered ramparts and steel-clad men-at-arms. From the terrace one could see the gray loom of the walls where lurid torchlight struck down upon them from tower and turret; beyond, the high-gabled dwellings of the prosperous city lay hiding in the dark, through which their lights peeked like a thousand jeweled eyes. Then, far down the river southward, a dark line athwart the moonlight, a looming blur—the foothills of the far-off Pyrenees.

Count Alphonse rose as his favorite captain approached, and took the young man's hand.

"Welcome, Pierre Faidit!" he cried, the anxious undertone to his voice revealing the strain under which he labored. "Welcome! Will you undertake a perilous errand for me?"

The quickening at Pierre's heart seemed to mount to his brain; his pulses pounded.

"Is it war, my lord?" he cried.

Alphonse-Jourdain smiled at his ardor. The count was very fond of his handsome young officer, who had indeed deserved it. Pierre Faidit was a lithe young giant, a very marvel with the sword, and endowed with a keen brain inside a curly head that had the stern, aquiline beauty of a Cæsar's.

"It may well be war," the count answered, "unless you can avert it. If you fail, the blood of seventy murdered men will be lost in the blood of half my people, as this tiny fountain would be lost in the great waters of yonder river!" He pointed to the Garonne, rippling silver under the moon.

Pierre waited, his breath coming quick, for the news behind the count's outburst.

"You have heard of Red Hugo?"

Pierre nodded.

"The Norman adventurer who seized the castle of Tarascon three years ago?"

"The same," Alphonse confirmed. "You know Tarascon lies on the Ariège, in the southern part of the county of Foix; and the Count of Foix is my vassal. When this Norman, Hugo, took Tarascon, I sent an order to the Count of Foix, commanding him to throw the intruder out, and punish him for violating my territory. But Roger of Foix replied that Red Hugo paid his taxes as honestly as if he had come by Tarascon by peaceful means, and acknowledged my sovereignty.

"So, seeing that the count had no complaint to make against the man who had seized one of his strongholds, and considering it more the business of Foix than of Toulouse, I dropped the matter. After all, I thought, it is Count Roger, not I, who must have this Norman for a neighbor, and so long as they live together in peace——"

Alphonse paused a moment, then resumed:

"But this Red Hugo is not a peaceful man. I have been hearing, from time to time, of many petty outrages between Tarascon and Foix, and have referred all complaints to Count Roger. It is not my affair until he proves incapable of dealing with it. But now—the message reached me not an hour ago—Red Hugo has done a deed which places him under my direct jurisdiction. He has slain seventy pilgrims, who were on their way from Arles-sur-Tech with gifts for the shrine of St. Sernin, here in Toulouse!"

Pierre Faidit cried out with horror. "Pilgrims! But they are sacrosanct, inviolate, by the order of Holy Church!"

"Even so. The Prior of St. Sernin, as you know, is my cousin; and all his years of prayer and fasting have not purged the fiery spirit from his blood. He was here but now, clamoring for vengeance. I have promised he shall have it, and resolved to put the affair in your hands. Will you go?"

"You know I will go!" the young man

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answered. "Ah, my lord! What is there that I would not do for you? You found me a humble fisher-lad, without hope or power ever to make more of myself—with nothing but dreams that could not come true! You made those dreams come true! In your service I have won honor and rich rewards; you made me captain of your South Tower. Nay, more, you have treated me like a son, have brought me up, these last four years, in your own household, teaching me to read, as if I had been nobly born! Ah, what do I not owe to you?"

"Ah, *zut!*" the count protested. "What did you do for me, four years ago, eh? You saved Toulouse and my honor. It was your sword-arm and the cunning of your brain that sent King Louis' army reeling back across the border, and made the king himself my prisoner. And three years hence did you not win back Aigues-Mortes from the Moors? And last year, when, as my ambassador, you negotiated peace with Thibault of Champagne, on terms that Thibault still mourns over!— Well, you will go. I can spare you but nine hundred men, but I will give you credentials to the Count of Foix."

"Nine hundred should be enough," Pierre reflected. "No, not enough, by themselves, to take so strong a fortalice as Tarascon; but enough with such forces as Roger of Foix will lend me."

Alphonse-Jourdain's smile was bleak. "I will command him to lend you all the men he has available; but he may not consent."

For a moment Pierre was nonplused.

"Not consent? But, my lord! He is your vassal, sworn to aid you against your enemies. Is not Red Hugo your enemy? How can the Count of Foix refuse? Would he make himself a traitor?"

"I—think—not," Alphonse hesitated. "I have always held Roger of Foix a brave soldier and gallant gentleman. But—there is something strange in his unwillingness to get rid of this Hugo himself. The complaints, these three years past, have been enough to spur him to action. And—you know—the Count of Barcelona has always disputed my right to the overlordship of Foix."

"But you do not mean——"

"I mean," Count Alphonse interrupted, "that Count Raymond-Bérenger of Barcelona, Red Hugo of Tarascon, and Roger of Foix may have common interests—interests which threaten mine. Ho, there!"

"My lord?"

The answer came from an angle of the wall where the terrace joined the rampart; and a soldier strode toward them up the slope, his long mail hauberk rippling white in the moonlight.

"A torch!" the count commanded.

The man-at-arms was off at a run, his mail jingling musically through the half-dark. A pale red splotch heralded his return with the light, which he set in a socket in the arm of the marble bench whereon Alphonse had seated himself.

"Read this!" the count commanded; and Pierre took a letter from his hand.

It bore the seal and awkward scrawl of Roger of Foix; and though it opened and closed with assurances of devoted loyalty, Pierre scowled as he read it. It had arrived too soon to touch upon the murder of the pilgrims, of which Alphonse himself had just heard; but replying to an earlier request that Roger expel Red Hugo from Tarascon, the letter confessed its writer's inability to obey.

I have received strict warning (wrote the Count of Foix) from Bérenger of Barcelona that the first blow I strike against Red Hugo will be counted a declaration of war against Barcelona itself. Raymond-Bérenger claims that this Hugo is a subject of his, and thus under his protection. He asserts also that my own failure to attack Tarascon during the last three years is an admission of Hugo's right to keep it. If I march on Tarascon now, Bérenger will attack me for infringing the privileges of his vassal. He denies that Hugo ever swore allegiance to me and to Toulouse. Do not ask me, my lord, to court my own destruction!

"You see now," Alphonse broke in, "why the murder of these pilgrims may mean war—war between Toulouse and Barcelona. And Raymond-Bérenger has five men to every three of mine! The only way to avoid a war which we could not win is to take Tarascon by a swift coup. Of course Bérenger had nothing to do with the slaughter of the pilgrims; but as soon as he hears of it he will concentrate his armies on the southern border of Foix. I can not let those murders go unpunished, and Bérenger will know it. We must take Tarascon, and hold it, before his troops can reach it.

"It is strong enough to defy siege for a month, if fully garrisoned; and by that time I could buy help from the King of France. But if we attack Tarascon and fail to capture it, Bérenger will use this pretext that Hugo is his vassal to occupy it himself.

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In that event he can overawe Foix into submission, and take the whole county from me.

"Thus all hangs on your ability to persuade Roger of Foix to lend you his troops. With them, and your nine hundred, you may be able to take Tarascon by storm; without them, your nine hundred will be too few. I can not spare you more, for my spies report that Aquitaine is meditating another invasion of Toulouse.

"If Roger will not help you, or if you can not overcome Red Hugo by direct assault, do not attempt a siege. It would take too long, and the hosts of Barcelona would get time to come up and overwhelm you. Your task, then, is to win Roger's support. Remind him of his allegiance to me, promise him any rewards; aye, even threaten him, if need be!"

"Nine hundred men," Pierre pondered. "Give me eight hundred mounted men-at-arms, my lord, and five-score archers. If they can be in readiness to march at dawn? Good, my lord!"

OLD SIMON, master of the garrison of Toulouse, had the privilege of a bed in the armory. On this bed he was enjoying a glorious dream of some fierce battle of his youth, when something shot through the dream and stung him broad awake. Pierre Faidit, torch in hand, was bending over him.

"Well?" the veteran growled.

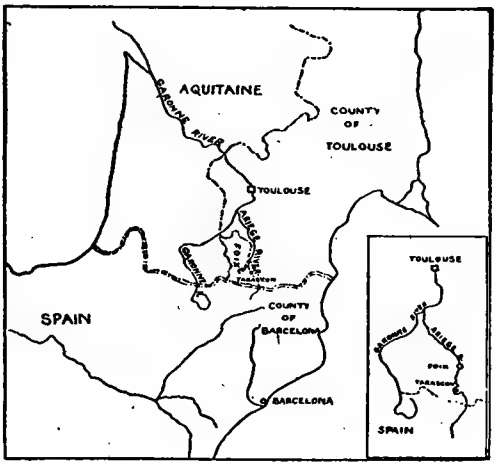
Though he loved Pierre, he never felt obliged to be polite to him. Twelve years ago Pierre, a boy with the muscle and resource of a man, had been a common soldier under Simon's handling; and the old man could not quite escape the feeling that most of the young captain's distinction had been somehow due to that handling.

So he patronized Pierre, though ready always to admit Pierre's greater abilities. Simon was an admirable officer, knowing every corner of the fortifications, every face in his garrison, and full of resource in the proper use of both; but none knew better than he that Pierre was his master in strategy, if not in tactics.

"You are to go with me to Foix," Pierre announced; and the old man struggled up, blinking.

"Foix? What next? Why?"

"We march to turn Red Hugo out of Tarascon," the other explained. "Nine hundred strong. It is so delicate a task that, after pondering it, I asked the count to send you as my lieutenant."



"Your lieutenant!" Simon jeered. "Why, you undubbed cockerel! But for the count's favor I should still be giving you orders, and you taking them with a bow and an 'As you command, good Simon!' Well, I will go with you. There will be good fighting, I hope; and you have a head on your shoulders!"

So the gray dawn saw the south gate of Toulouse pour out a stream of horsemen and brown-jerkined archers; and sunrise flashed on the armor of eager men that advanced down the vineyard-bordered road with the briskness of soldiers who go forth from hateful idleness to long-desired action.

Pierre rode in the van, deep in talk with old Simon, but ever casting a watchful eye down the white highway.

The road ran roughly south from Toulouse, following the Garonne and its tributary, the Ariège. Rutted and deep-worn at best, it had been badly washed out by the floods of the Spring before, so that the horses found it heavy going. The advance was slow, determined not only by the state of the road, but even more by the plodding archers that marched, in three divisions, before, behind, and between the two troops of cavalry.

Thirty miles above Toulouse, finding himself in territory where burned and ravaged villages bore witness to Red Hugo's raids, Pierre sent forward a dozen riders to act as scouts.

Ten miles farther, the high hills near Foix

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rose in wild loveliness; but Pierre saw it with a soldier's eye. The terrane was perfect for ambuscade: the road hugged the Ariège in all its windings, often between overhanging banks dense with shrubbery. So Pierre took no chances, and maintained ceaseless vigilance; though Red Hugo would scarce dare attack nine hundred men.

At Varilhes, fifty miles out of Toulouse, he ordered a halt. Here road and river plunged into a deep, rugged mountain defile, and night was coming on. When his scouts returned to report all clear, Pierre gave Simon his final orders.

"We can bring the host no nearer to Foix," he said, "until I have spoken with Count Roger. The garrison will already have seen our approach from the walls. Roger of Foix, who seems to have a bad conscience already, would think we were marching to attack him, and would refuse to let us enter or pass.

"Therefore I must ride ahead to Foix, to present my credentials. I will take ten men-at-arms with me; you must remain behind with the troops. My first task is to learn whether Count Roger will help us against Red Hugo; and if not, whether he is in league with Barcelona, or merely afraid of its power.

"At dawn I will send a man to tell you what I have learned. If Roger will help us, this man will carry you my orders to advance and enter Foix, where the Count's men will join us. But if Roger refuses help, I shall ride on to Tarascon with the few men I have, and send you a messenger to instruct you when to advance."

"Death and the devil!" swore Simon. "You would ride with a mere handful to Tarascon? You would be gobbled up by Red Hugo's riders before you have gone a league; or once inside its walls, you will never come out alive! You will need every man of us!"

"Nay, old thick-wit!" laughed Pierre. "Unless Foix joins us, can nine hundred take Tarascon? Or would Red Hugo open his gates to so many? He would stand us all off till help reached him from Barcelona. My only chance of capturing Hugo is to get inside his walls; and the only chance of that is to go with so few men that he will neither suspect nor fear us."

"But once in Tarascon, what can ten men do?" the veteran grumbled.

"Leave that to me. If I can not match this bandit's wits with mine, and find some trick to lure him to his ruin, I will fling away my sword and be a fisherman again!—But there may be no need of that; Roger may join us. If not, then my credentials will persuade him to let me pass through the city; and he will certainly let you follow. He can not stop an armed company of his lord's men without declaring open war on Toulouse. In that case, as soon as my messenger reaches you, make the best speed you can."

ROGER OF FOIX was a big man, strong-limbed and strong-featured; but his restless eyes had something furtive in them. This he seemed to know, for he would not meet Pierre's gaze. He reread the letters Pierre had handed him, scowling and plucking at his thick black beard.

"You know what your master writes?" he asked, looking past the young man rather than at him.

"I have my lord's full trust," Pierre answered.

The Count of Foix looked him over with more interest. He saw a clear-eyed young giant, in splendid armor such as only men of noble blood were wont to wear. It was the gift of Alphonse-Jourdain; but to Roger of Foix it implied rank and wealth. Therefore, not knowing the young man's humble birth, he spoke as to one but little his inferior.

"I do not remember you among the knights of Toulouse," he said. "Your name and title?"

"I am Pierre Faidit, captain of the south tower."

Roger of Foix opened his sly eyes wide. There were few in France who had not heard of Pierre Faidit, whose deeds of arms and brilliant strategy had for four years helped to make Toulouse great. He remembered that Alphonse-Jourdain was said to prize Pierre more highly than any of the proud knights that fought under his banner. For a single instant Roger's gaze met Pierre's fairly; and Pierre did not like its expression.

"What is your answer?" the Toulousan asked bluntly.

The Count of Foix sighed heavily.

"I can not help you," he replied, "though I would if I had the power. Heaven knows I have been faithful to Toulouse! But Alphonse-Jourdain can not ask me to cut my own throat."

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Contempt edged Pierre's voice as he retorted:

"Is the great Count of Foix afraid of a mere brigand? Does he not dare to reclaim his own land, stolen from him by an outlaw?"

"*Cap de Deus!*" swore Roger. "Afraid? I? No, not if it were man against man! Does Alphonse know that Bérenger of Barcelona would crush me if I raised a hand against Red Hugo? Does he reflect that my towers are but five days' march from Barcelona itself?"

"I understand," Pierre spoke slowly. "Then I must finish the matter myself. You will of course grant me and my forces free passage through to Tarascon?"

Roger smiled queerly.

"With pleasure," he replied.

BEFORE sunrise Pierre passed with nine men-at-arms between the guards at the southern gate of Foix. Half an hour before, he had dispatched a single rider north to Simon's camp, with this message:

Foix refused. Follow me to Tarascon. If a second messenger does not meet you by one hour past noon, reporting that I am in Tarascon and have found a way to open the gates to you, you may know that I have failed. In that case, press on with all speed; be at Tarascon at midnight; lay siege to the walls, but do not force the fighting at once. Make more noise than trouble!

Pierre and his little band had a scant ten miles to Tarascon, which lay on a crag girt half-round by a bend in the Ariège, and much higher than the citadel of Foix. But the way was rough and steep, and the going slow. The horses had been climbing half an hour when Pierre looked back at the gray ramparts of Foix, rising, one line of defense above and within another, in impregnable pride above its hills. The first rays of the sun bathed it in soft pink as he gazed, his eyes troubled.

"There is mischief somewhere," he mused. "Roger was too willing to let me through. I do not trust him."

Rough as the road was, Pierre made far better time with his nine than Simon's larger company could hope to do. Even when Tarascon was clear in view, he could see no trace of them behind. This did not trouble him; his message to Simon had said "midnight" for a purpose.

The Ariège flowed turbulently now, for the rise was steep and rocky. Sparse undergrowth half-concealed the flashing water till a sudden twist in the mountain trail brought the riders abruptly to the edge of a ford. The farther bank was lower, and thickly shaded with willow.

"On the alert!" warned Pierre; and his men drew as close together as the boulder-strewn ford would allow.

Each loosed his sword as he splashed into the icy stream, which deepened in mid-current. The horses were over their knees, and stumbling on hidden stones, when a horseman loomed up in the path beyond.

"Who goes?" the stranger challenged.

Before Pierre could answer, arrows flickered from the cover of the willows. One of the men-at-arms screamed, and slid from his horse.

Pierre's sword flashed.

"Over, and at them!" he shouted.

The Toulousans, disregarding the tricky footing of the ford, drove their spurs deep, till their mounts, snorting and scenting blood, had plunged up the farther bank and through the willows. They charged full into a second arrow-flight, which swept two more men down at close range. Then they were through, driving four archers into flight. But the skirmish was only begun.

Beyond the willows, which had given the archers cover, the land lay flat and bare, a rocky plateau below the crag of Tarascon. A dozen horsemen in mid-road covered the bowmen's flight. Plainly the archers had orders to take position again at the end of the plateau, behind the riders, and loose their shafts a third time.

But Pierre gave them no chance. Outnumbered as he was, he led his handful of veterans in a smashing charge full on the hostile cavalry. The enemy's struggles to hold their mounts in line proved them bandits rather than drilled soldiers. The heavy horses of Toulouse, trained to war, knew their duty as well as their riders; they bore down straight and true, recoiled when their impact had thrown the ill-mounted bandits into confusion, and half-wheeled to let the Toulousan lances, already dripping, plunge in a second time.

Borne back by the first assault, the bandits were forced to cast down their spears and draw sword. Three were already unhorsed, with lance-wounds in throat or breast, and two more were thrown by their wounded horses. Helped up by their companions, these strove to exchange strokes

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with Pierre's mounted men, but at a disadvantage all the greater for the skill with which the Toulousan horses rode them down or bowled them flat with shoulder-thrusts. And wo to him who fell, with the sword poised above his head!

"Make an end!" Pierre cried, spurring straight for him who urged the bandits on.

This was more to the enemy's liking, for they knew sword-play, and their lighter horses did not wince from close combat as from the thunder of a charge. But their rally lasted not long; for a few swift sword-strokes ended in their captain's fall, Pierre's blade cleaving him to the chin. Wheeling their horses briskly, the brigands broke into full flight for Tarascon, their archers scampering behind.

The Toulousans would have pursued, furious at the treachery of the attack and the slaughter of their comrades; but Pierre held them sternly in check.

"We have wrought enough harm," he observed grimly. "It will be hard for us to get peaceful entrance into Tarascon now. We have taken five lives to pay for three; turn to now and bury our fellows. Leave these sons of dogs to the ravens!"

The slain were laid in a common grave, and rocks were piled above the fresh-turned earth. As the party mounted again, one asked:

"Those were Red Hugo's men? Giles, posted on the rock there, saw them enter Tarascon."

Pierre nodded.

"We may look for trouble, lads. We were expected, or we should not have been attacked. Red Hugo must have had word of our coming. But how?"

Nor, cudgel his brains as he would, could he find a satisfactory answer. Could the Count of Foix have warned the enemy? He could have had no motive. It would have been treason, and what profit was there in it?

His lips compressed in an angry line, Pierre led his six riders straight for the crag of Tarascon. Within the quarter of an hour they were close enough to see the glinting helmets of sentinels three-fourths concealed behind its walls; half an hour, and Pierre was sure that the battlements boasted no siege-engines. He might be wrong; but catapults not in use show their presence by the sky-pointing wooden arms above the merlons. Anyhow, so small a stronghold would scarcely be equipped with engines.

For small Tarascon was, though very strong. The north wall measured scarcely sixty feet; and Pierre guessed the whole less than eighty feet on east and west. It consisted of a tower surrounded by a wall of masonry, built on the solid rock of a high crag around which the Ariège nestled protectingly.

It would be necessary for Pierre to cross the river again just south of the castle, and —so he guessed—climb the southern face of the cliff by a winding way. It would go ill with any force that tried that escalade; for, as the Toulousans forded the stream and gained the narrow road that led to the outer gate, they saw how every foot of the approach was commanded by the grim walls above.

"*Deus!*" the soldier Giles exclaimed. "This place can not be undermined. Shovels can not dig through rock. Nor can it be taken by storm. Unless we can open the gates, good captain, old Simon will have a desperate time trying to win through!"

This was bad enough; but worse thoughts vexed Pierre. He was surprized that they had been allowed to come so far without a second attack; and now he and all with him felt the hair prickle on their necks with the expectation that at any moment a mass of rock or a dozen javelins hurled from the ramparts above might tear their lives from them.

Indeed, Pierre wondered why that hail of destruction did not come, since the garrison must know of the fight on the plateau by the ford.

Now rough laughter drifted down from the walls, but no finger was raised against them. When his horse breasted the last foot of the slope, Pierre could not keep back a great sigh of relief. Yet his perils were truly just beginning. Within that castle Red Hugo waited, doubtless infuriated by the defeat of his ambuscade.

Pierre had hoped to enter Tarascon not as a confessed enemy, but as the bearer of orders from Toulouse. His plan had been to appear before Hugo with Alphonse-Jourdain's command to get his bandits out and across the border. Of course, Hugo would have laughed such an order to scorn; but Pierre, as an envoy, would at least have been safe, and would have had until midnight to work out some scheme to open the

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gates to Simon's troops. Such things had been done, over and over again; and though the plan could not be definitely worked out till Pierre could observe the construction and plan of the castle, he trusted the keenness of his own brain.

But now he must enter—if he could get in at all—as a confessed enemy, with the blood of Hugo's retainers still on his sword. He would not be allowed the freedom of the castle; he might be thrown into the dungeons, or slain outright before the gate.

He made the resolve, then, that he would enter or perish. A second, more desperate plan shaped itself in his mind, to be used if he lived to come before Red Hugo's presence.

Tarascon had no moat, nor needed any, the approach being so perilous. The stout gate, flanked by projecting demi-turrets, was open as if to receive its visitors. A number of men-at-arms, rough fellows in coarse mail, stood about armed to the teeth; while others peered down from the battlements. A pair of them swaggered up to meet Pierre, grinning insolently; and one spoke:

"Welcome to Tarascon, noble sir! Our master expects you, and prays you to enter!"

More disturbed than pleased by this ambiguous greeting, Pierre rode under the arch of the gate, his men at his back. But here, in the bailey between tower and outer wall, his guide waved back the Toulousan men-at-arms.

"Nay!" he said, abandoning all pretense of courtesy. "Your men must bide here. They will be well cared for!"

Giles clapped a hand to his sword, but Pierre rebuked him. Violence could avail nothing now. He had come to match wits with Red Hugo; and wits alone must save or ruin him. But he was very glad he had compelled Simon to hold the main force back.

A direct attack on that castle would have brought his men full under a death-dealing hail from those walls, all along the steep and winding way. It would have meant ruin. Moreover, he saw now that a slow siege would accomplish no more than assault. A great stone cistern, plainly fed by springs in the crag itself, provided an inexhaustible water-supply even though a mighty army, with powerful siege-engines, should so dominate the walls that the garrison could not lower buckets to the river.

So on Pierre went, following his guide across the bailey to the tower, or keep. As he went, he stole swift glances to right and left, noting the stables and soldiers' quarters built against, and even in, the thick walls.

"You are well garrisoned," he remarked with forced amiability. "I see many men in yonder barracks."

The guide nodded curtly.

THE ground-floor of the tower was a guard-room, from which a stair led to the living-apartments, and still higher to the battlements above. The tower as a whole was a fortress within a fortress, the refuge of the garrison in case the outer wall should be stormed. Yet it seemed to Pierre's roving eyes that two hundred men might easily hold this keep against seven times as many.

As he set foot on the stair, he heard the noise of gusty merriment roll down to meet him, swelling to a loud hum as he reached the top; and at last a very riot of talk, laughter, and shouted oaths.

The guide thrust aside the heavy hangings of the hall doorway, revealing a revel truly barbaric. The great room was crowded with men, sturdy rascals all, feasting at two long tables, sprawling on benches and gnawing gobbets of greasy meat, or drinking without restraint. Others, armed and mailed, stood along the walls, and lined the approach to a dais at the opposite end from the doorway.

This dais was a wide, low platform, with its own table for the lord of the castle, his highest officers, and noble guests. Now there were three men at this table: one in the high seat of the master, and one on each side of him.

The din was so loud and the merriment so high that for a moment Pierre and his guide stood unnoticed within the doorway; and Pierre had time for a swift glance at the three men on the dais. His eyes first sought out him who sat in the midmost seat, the lord of the castle; whose appearance bore out the worst reports of his bloodthirstiness. For this was Red Hugo.

Hugo, with massive limbs awkwardly asprawl; hair, brows, and beard one tangled mane of red; evil eyes in which danced the twin devils of cruelty and drink; a hooked, scarred nose and hard lips—this was he on whose soul lay the murder of seventy unarmed pilgrims.

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To one entering the hall as Pierre had done, his fierce figure was framed as in a picture, so that the eye was drawn to him at once. Pierre's quick brain guessed the picture prearranged for his benefit, and despised the trick.

Yet Hugo held his gaze, as a thing superlatively evil must, till Pierre's shrewd scrutiny saw the man's smallness under his ferocious aspect. It takes more than ferocity and low cunning to make a strong man; and Red Hugo was not so strong but that he could serve as the tool of Barcelona.

The man on Hugo's right was a tall, thin soldier, with the fine features of the aristocrat, and frank, soldierly bearing. He on the bandit's left drew Pierre's gaze last, and held it longest. He was younger than the others, and shorter, though very strongly made, with big shoulders. Pierre noted the splendor of his attire; his long robe of azure silk was of the new fashion, with wide sleeves to the wrist, richly embroidered in heavy gold thread, and bound at the waist with a narrow girdle of gold plates.

But it was not his brave array, nor the long, fine black hair that reached his shoulders, nor his bold, beautiful features; it was his eyes that commanded Pierre's admiration. They were wide, sea-blue eyes, with just a tinge of green; they fascinated like jewels, and gleamed like steel.

But as Pierre's eyes clung to them, a harsh voice blared through the din, silencing it instantly:

"Hail, Pierre Faidit! We have waited for your coming. Will Alphonse-Jourdain have my head on a silver trencher, as Salome had St. John's? Or shall I wait for your nine hundred varlets to come and fetch me? Speak, that I may serve you!"

All Pierre's native poise could not hide his astonished dismay. Though he had not hoped, since the fight at the ford, for more than a desperate chance, he had not dreamed that Red Hugo would know his name or the nature of his errand. Indeed, he had counted on the brigand's ignorance of these things for that gambler's chance that alone could afford him some means of eluding vigilance long enough to throw the castle open for Simon.

Now there was no chance; somehow Red Hugo had learned all, and had not only numbers and position, but even the final advantage of playing with his own dice. In his sudden hopelessness, his mind grasped at the wild thought that had come to him as he had clambered up the perilous way to the gate—

"Leap upon him now, slay him, and go down fighting!"

But even this was denied. A knot of armed men stood between him and the dais, watching his every move.

As he hesitated he saw a smile of derision flit over Red Hugo's thin lips. He must say something, something which should uphold the dignity of Toulouse. So he answered, coolly enough:

"As you say, Sir Hugo, I am the envoy of Toulouse; though I know not how you learned of me. I need not your head, having one of my own. If I had wanted it, should I not have brought all my nine hundred men-at-arms with me?"

The bandit's head wagged with mirth.

"Well lied!" he shouted. "See, good youth, how the jest pleases my companions!"

And indeed the men-at-arms that thronged the hall echoed Hugo's laughter uproariously.

"But I will answer your riddle for you. Last night, while you slept at Foix, Count Roger sent me a secret message warning me of your errand."

He paused; then seeming suddenly to fly into a fury, he cried out:

"Laugh, you fool! You would have laughed had you tricked me to my death; can you not laugh when the shoe is on the other foot? Is not the joke merrier when he who would bite is bitten?"

His anger died as swiftly as it had risen, and he added silkily:

"There is a dungeon beneath this tower, cold and damp enough to chill even your ardor. There you shall lie until Alphonse-Jourdain buys your freedom on my terms. Would you hear those terms? Your master—if he would see you alive—must grant me full amnesty for all deeds with which I am charged; confirm my title to Tarascon, and pay a ransom of ten thousand marks. Five thousand will go to me; the rest to Roger of Foix, who recognized the high price you would fetch as soon as you told him your name!"

Now Pierre understood indeed. He knew Alphonse-Jourdain well enough to be sure he would pay this price, vast as it was—aye, though it cost him Foix—rather than let his favorite captain perish in the foul dungeons

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of Tarascon. The Count of Toulouse held his men's loyalty because he was first of all loyal to them. But Pierre wished not for life on such terms. His humiliation was almost more than he could bear.

But Hugo was speaking again, his insolent voice heaping up fresh taunts.

"Look you," he triumphed, "your master can not claim that I have wantonly molested an envoy; for I shall say that you slew five of my men, without provocation, on my own soil. Ha, you see the purpose of that ambush now?"

Bitterly Pierre admitted to himself how entirely he had been outwitted. All France would have risen in arms—except for the worst enemies of Toulouse—against the man who dared violate the immunity of an envoy. But now he had been put hopelessly in the wrong. Who would believe his word that Red Hugo's men, not Pierre's, had been the aggressors at the ford?

He could see, from the faces of the two men at Hugo's side, that they accepted the bandit's statement. And in a little while Pierre and his men would be in a dungeon, where they could not testify. It was this thought that unloosed his tongue. He would testify now!

"Dog, and son of a dog!" he cried. "You know well your men attacked mine! You charge me with murder; I hurl the charge back in your teeth, before these men of yours! If you dare defend your lie, draw sword and fight me! I claim trial by combat. God will show the right!"

Straightway Red Hugo's men-at-arms closed in, fingering their weapons. Knowing himself safe, the bandit laughed in scorn.

"Fight you? Nay, why should I? Are you not in my power? Seize him, guards!"

Pierre's sword flashed out; he sprang forward to cut a path to his enemy. But swiftly as he moved, another moved more swiftly. A lithe form broke through the soldiers between Hugo and Pierre, and struck up his sword.

It was the richly appareled officer who had sat on the bandit's left. He had drawn and leaped with incredible swiftness. Now he faced Pierre, his point, however, playing in menacing little flashes toward Hugo's men-at-arms, who would else have fallen on the Toulousan.

"Nay, Sir Hugo, you must fight!" he interposed. "Has he not given you the lie? Have you not accused him of murder, and he flung back the charge? No French gentleman can refuse a challenge! Am I not right, my lord of Armagnac?"

The last words startled Pierre more than the aid so unexpectedly lent him. Armagnac? There was but one lord of Armagnac; that was Bertrand, Seneschal of Aquitaine! And the Duchess of Aquitaine, even more than Bérenger of Barcelona, was the bitter enemy of Toulouse! Bérenger desired no more than a rich slice of Alphonse-Jourdain's territory; but Aliénor of Aquitaine would give her evil soul to see him dead, and Toulouse in ruins. But she had married the King of France, who was bound by treaty with Toulouse to keep peace with Alphonse. As Duchess of Aquitaine, Aliénor could declare war in her own right, but she could not involve the Kingdom of France.

But before Pierre could make out what this meant, the third man on the dais spoke out quietly:

"Cercamon is right, Hugo. You are in honor bound to fight!"

The garrison howled its disapproval, and Hugo bellowed furiously:

"I will not fight him! Am I not in my own house? Let him be thrown into the dungeon!"

But Cercamon of the rich robes interfered again; his fine eyes blazing.

"If you will not fight him, let me!" he urged. "I will take your quarrel on my shoulders. Rather would I die than see a soldier condemned without his right to appeal to arms. You must let me fight him; and if he slays me, you must let him and his go free!"

The name Cercamon cleared away Pierre's bewilderment. It was one of the most famous names in France; the name of a man preeminent for his poetic skill, and no less for his mastery of the sword. All the world knew Cercamon, first of troubadours, pattern of chivalry, and—trusted servant of Raymond-Bérenger!

Pierre saw now that Cercamon must be here to close the bargain between Red Hugo and Barcelona, the bargain by which all of Foix was to be torn from Toulouse and given to Bérenger. And Bertrand of Armagnac's presence meant either that Queen Aliénor was helping Bérenger, or that Aquitaine—without the King's authority, but quite within its legal privileges—was bidding against Barcelona for the same prize! Pierre remembered that it was fear of

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invasion from Aquitaine which had prevented Alphonse-Jourdain from marching on Tarascon himself.

Cercamon's readiness to fight Pierre in Hugo's quarrel was now also clear. The troubadour's honor would have been stained had he connived at Hugo's treachery; moreover, the famous swordsman must have felt confident that he could kill even so formidable an antagonist as Pierre, and thus defeat Alphonse-Jourdain's one chance of saving Foix. By killing Pierre in fair fight Cercamon could both save his honor and serve his lord.

Red Hugo must suddenly have perceived some advantage to himself in Cercamon's offer, for his eyes lighted with an unholy gleam.

"So be it!" he agreed. "Fight him, then! Stand back all, and give them room!"

All obeyed; and Pierre, seeing his opponent unarmored, stripped off his own hauberk. The troubadour advanced with catlike grace, and the two blades clashed. The play of point and edge that followed was so fast, so clean, so beautifully matched, that none could see advantage on either side. Again and again Pierre's point flickered in, only to be turned by the other's skilful guard.

Over and over the troubadour struck, to meet a parry as perfect as his own. Blue eyes and black burned into each other, watching for the gleam that foretold the stroke; and never did either misjudge by a hair. The bandits massed about, neither spoke nor moved, watching with quick-taken breaths and little sighs of excitement.

For several minutes neither gave ground; then Pierre's weight and muscle began to tell. But they gained him no real advantage; for Cercamon, instead of giving ground before his onset, danced around him with lithe nimbleness, ducking now to right, now to left; and always his point played on the very quick of Pierre's guard, as Pierre's played close to his.

It was a wondrous duel, such as none there had ever witnessed. Both antagonists were breathing short, striking with shorter, quicker thrusts and little, dangerous side-cuts, when, catching the eye of one of his blackguards, Red Hugo raised his hand.

Pierre heard a sudden cry of rage from the Count of Armagnac; but he was poised for a blow, and dared not look aside. Even as he struck, something beat him down from behind. He fell prone and senseless. Instantly the troubadour leaped over his body, struck out like a tiger, and buried his blade in the skull of the coward whose mace-handle had felled Pierre.

AS A SWIMMER who has been under water too long comes up through an agonizing darkness that weighs on breast and brain, so Pierre struggled up through a sea of painful night into slow consciousness. One by one his faculties awoke from a clinging dream, till he sat up with a start, and felt sick with sudden pain. Wondering, he strove to rise, but something that clung to his right ankle flung him back. The hand with which he fumbled felt an iron shackle locked about his bare leg.

He touched his breast, his arms, his thighs. He was naked, and fettered. His finger followed the chain that bound him. It was no more than four feet long, and ended in a massive staple in the stone floor. Rising cautiously, he peered into the gloom all about him, till, high above his head, and some distance to the right, he saw a single star. Craning his neck to look at it, he felt a numbness at the back of his head; his exploring fingers touched something wet and sticky.

Then memory came back; the fight in the hall, the troubadour's darting blade, the —but he could recall no more. Now he was a prisoner, in a stone cell, stripped of arms and clothing, chained to the floor. And it was night!

Night? But what time? Was it midnight yet? God forbid, or the next moment might bring Simon and his host, with no one to open the gates to them—to attempt a forlorn assault upon walls impregnable; walls manned by a garrison warned and alert.

And he, Pierre, was helpless even to shout a word of caution! He had ruined his own enterprise; made certain the destruction of his own men; flung away his master's one chance of saving Foix! Too vain of his own shrewdness, he had let himself be played with like the dull-witted peasant he was!

Yet he did not despair. Once more his brain set itself to solve the impossible problem, to rebuild the temple of success from the ruins of defeat. Back and forth his thoughts fluttered, alighting nowhere on solid hope, but searching ever for some support, however frail. He knew not how long he lay on the cold stone, husbanding his

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strength and unraveling the tangled skein of thought; yet at last an end came.

Somewhere back of him iron bolts slid back with a rusty screech; a blaze of light seared his eyes. Voices; then a steel-clad form stood before him, sharp against the red glare of a torch. The face was hidden, but the voice that greeted him was Cercamon's—

"You are badly hurt?"

Pierre shook his head, but would not speak. His thoughts of this man were black; for he had no way of knowing that the troubadour had not connived at the foul blow that had struck him down. He knew only that in the midst of fight he had been smitten treacherously from behind, and now was in a plight to which no honest enemy would have consented. But Cercamon's next words set him right:

"I have done what I could to save you, Pierre Faidit. He who struck you lies dead under my sword. I prayed Hugo to confine you in a chamber above, rather than here; but he refused. More I can not do without imperiling my master's affairs, which are already in bad plight."

It is hard for a naked man in chains to preserve his dignity before one mailed and free; but Pierre achieved the feat. Gravely he thanked the troubadour; and for Toulouse's sake asked further—

"Can you not find some way to help me to escape?"

Cercamon laughed shortly.

"Not I! You serve Toulouse; I serve Barcelona. I bribed the jailer to let me speak with you; but if I did more, you might yet find some way to defeat my master's purpose. Already Bertrand of Armagnac has bought Hugo's support away from Bérenger to Aliénor; the bandit has agreed to deliver Tarascon not to me, but to Bertrand. Within four and twenty hours troops from Aquitaine will be here, with catapults and provisions, to take over the castle.

"With Tarascon safe in the Count of Armagnac's hands, Aquitaine can send an army against Foix with no danger of an attack from its rival, Barcelona; Foix will fall, and then Aliénor's forces can strike at Toulouse from south and north at once. The King of France will not interfere; for his treaty with Alphonse binds him only not to make war on Toulouse himself."

Pierre groaned; and Cercamon continued:

"The only escape for Toulouse from this double danger lies in Raymond-Bérenger's getting possession of Tarascon before tomorrow night. Having learned from my spies in Aquitaine that Armagnac's host would follow him here, I came myself to buy back Red Hugo's allegiance. I foresaw that Armagnac might outbid me again, and therefore had two thousand men from Barcelona hidden in the mountain passes south of here. I ride forth now to lead them against the castle. When Armagnac's troops come, they will be too late!"

"Why has not Red Hugo thrust you in prison, as he has me?" Pierre interposed; and the troubadour laughed.

"Because he has no pretext, and he fears Barcelona more than he fears Toulouse. Has not Bertrand of Armagnac convinced him that Aquitaine is about to crush Toulouse?"

Now Pierre's thoughts had indeed found something to light on. Though Tarascon in Bérenger's hands would cost Toulouse only the county of Foix, and not its own destruction, it would mean as much shame to Pierre as would Aquitaine's success. But—how if there were a way to outwit both Bérenger and Aquitaine at once? Craftily he shifted the subject:

"I owe you much gratitude for your kindness; but it will avail me little. Sooner or later Red Hugo will learn that my master will not pay one copper to ransom me!"

"But you are a great soldier!" the troubadour protested. "You are the prince of swordsmen. Surely Alphonse-Jourdain would go deep into his treasury to free such a man!"

Now it hurt Pierre to deal uncandidly with one to whom he owed at least generous treatment; but there was no help for it. Barcelona was unjustly attempting to seize Toulousan territory. It was war between them; and strategy is fair in war. All that counted for Pierre was his new, faint hope that he might yet save Foix. So he answered with well-feigned gloom:

"I am but an ass masquerading in a lion's skin. My father was a fisherman; no pride of rank will urge my master to save me. Moreover, I have failed; and Alphonse-Jourdain never pardons failure. He will leave me in Red Hugo's hands!"

Now that which had put it into Pierre's head to say this was no more than the

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glimmer of the troubadour's jeweled dagger-haft in the torchlight.

But Cercamon's distress was deep.

"But Red Hugo has sworn to torture you," he cried, "if you are not ransomed!"

"Can any hear us?" Pierre whispered.

"Not a soul. The jailer who unlocked yonder door for me waits outside; but the wood is six inches thick. Would I else have told you what I have?"

"When do you depart?"

"At once!" the troubadour answered.

"And the time now?"

"Three hours after sunset."

Pierre stifled his gasp of relief. At that season four hours more must pass before midnight and Simon's coming. There was still time, if only——

"One thing you may do, troubadour, to save me from the torture. When you go, leave your dagger with me. Put it in my hand, for the chain that binds my ankle gives me no great reach."

Cercamon started back.

"You would take your own life?"

"Why not?" Pierre asked grimly. "Would Heaven hold the deed against a man who slays himself only to escape a more horrible death?"

"You are right. A Frenchman should die so, rather than by the hands of merciless thieves."

Stooping, the troubadour gripped Pierre's hand in farewell, then drew his dagger and placed it in the captive's fingers.

"May God strengthen you, and the Virgin intercede for you!" he prayed, and turned away.

Once more the door screamed on its hinges, a gruff voice spoke, and the light was blotted out.

Pierre's one hope lay in his knowledge that, since he was to be held for ransom, he would be fed, and—Heaven willing—before midnight. Nor was he wrong. On the heels of Cercamon's departure Pierre made ready for the jailer's coming; and within ten minutes the key turned in the lock again.

The staple that held the captive's short chain was so placed that he who fed him had no need to fear attack. Still, it was with caution that the jailer, torch in one hand and a hamper in the other, paused just within the cell to shove bread and wine to a point where Pierre could barely have reached it.

But in doing so he raised his torch to make certain of Pierre's position; and as the light fell on the prisoner, he fell back with an oath. For Pierre lay prone, sprawled out ominously; he moved not, though the jailer edged in and prodded him. There were blood-drops on the floor; a blood-stained dagger lay beside him.

Snatching up the knife, the jailer held it under the torch.

"Body of the devil!" he swore. "The Barcelonan! What hate he must have held against this man, to stab him in helpless-ness! Why, it was fair fight between them, and no cause for rancor!"

Tossing the knife toward the open door, he bent over Pierre, to turn him over and examine the wound.

But it was no corpse that clutched him by the throat, choking back the cry that would else have burst from him. In an unhappy moment the struggling jailer snatched from his girdle his massive bundle of keys, and brought them down blindly on his assailant's shoulder. The act cost him his life. Pierre's convulsive forward thrust with both clenched hands broke the fellow's neck. It had all happened without a sound that could have been heard ten feet outside the door.

Calmly Pierre picked up the spluttering torch and swung it till it blazed. It was perilous, for if the light should be seen through the open door by any passer-by—But no one passed.

Swiftly he examined the jailer's keys, and soon found one that undid the steel ring about his ankle. Being free of his chain, he could now close the door. His next act was to bind up, with a strip from the dead man's none too clean gown, the raw cut in his arm which had supplied the blood to deceive the jailer.

Then, to gain strength to carry out the plan that was taking shape in his mind, he munched the loaf and drank the thin wine that had been brought for him. When this was done, he put on the dead man's long gown of fustian; hid Cercamon's dagger in its sleeve, and left the cell, locking the door behind him.

Still, as ever since he had left Toulouse, his plan was incomplete, elastic, dependent on such contingencies as might lie in wait at any of the dangerous stages ahead. But the next step was clear; he must find his six comrades, if they still lived. Probably, like himself, they had been disarmed and

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imprisoned. Since in every small castle the dungeon cells lay close together he need search only in the vicinity of his own.

The first risk lay straight ahead. He was in the vaults under the tower; a square stone crypt, damp with water that seeped between the courses. Doors opened in the wall along which he advanced; but not twelve yards ahead, two men-at-arms leaned on their arms about a fire that glowed in a brazier. The gloom of the place hid his face from them; his body, wrapped in the jailer's garments, appeared to them but a flitting shadow whose shape and function they knew well. They neither challenged nor spoke. The door next his own cell lay close to his hand. Its key would be one of the three great fretted bars on the bundle at his belt. His choice lay between two, since he already knew the one for his own cell. In a moment he had the door open. His heart thumped violently as he stole a glance at the two guards; but to them he was a familiar figure on its accustomed round.

The cell was empty, save for something white in the ring of a fetter. Shuddering, Pierre bolted the door again, and moved toward the third cell. This brought him nearer the guards, wherefore he held his torch away from his face. Once more he swung open a massive door, and thrust the light within. Then he slipped inside, and closed the door tight. Six men lay on the damp floor; two chained as he had been; four, for whom there were no fetters, bound hand and foot and dumped together like sacks.

He whispered: "Be still! It is I, Pierre."

Then his knife severed their bonds; the fetters opened to his keys; and his comrades, stretching their cramped limbs, fell on their knees to thank him. But he silenced them abruptly:

"No words! Bide here till I fetch you arms. We have but three hours before Simon comes. Nay, you can not help. Lie still, till I come."

Then he was gone, bolting them in, lest the guards look in upon them.

Beyond the fire and the two armed knaves lay the stair to the guard-room. As he passed the two on duty one greeted him sleepily:

"Ho, Arnolt! Bring us wine. It is damp here, and our very bones freeze. 'Twill be long ere we are relieved, and then only to perch on the cold battlements watching for the men of Toulouse."

Pierre knew the danger of speaking; yet he felt he must know whether the bulk of the garrison had yet mounted to the ramparts to repel Simon's expected assault. Therefore he asked; hoping his voice might resemble that of the jailer for whom they took him. He forgot that he was a man of Languedoc, speaking a dialect distinguishable from their Norman.

The words no sooner left his lips than he who had asked for wine straightened up, eying Pierre sharply. The first glance assured him this stalwart giant was not Arnolt; but the second's time for that glance was enough for Pierre.

Before either guard could raise a pike or draw sword, he was on them. His right fist smashed the thirsty one senseless to the stones; the dagger leaped from his sleeve into his strong fingers, and found its sheath in the second man's throat. He stooped over the first, muttering anxiously:

"A brave clatter his mail made. A wax candle to St. Sernin if none hears!"

He waited a little, but there was no stir above stairs. Dragging the corpse and its unconscious companion to the cell that had been his own, he thrust them inside, bound and gagged him who lived, and bolted the door. The blood about the fire must remain; but he carefully scattered the coals in the grate to dull their glow, and extinguished the torch. Groping along the wall, he found the stair, and mounted softly.

The guard-room also had its fire; but only three men lay about it. At this, Pierre's heart bounded. It meant that the impending approach of Simon's host had forced Red Hugo to draw away almost all his garrison to the ramparts. From the shadow of the stair Pierre watched the three, pondering how he should come at them without rousing the garrison. He must have their armor for his own men; but he must get it without noise.

The men-at-arms could not see him in the gloom outside the firelight, and he took care they should hear nothing, holding his very breath. They were talking in low tones, ever and anon laughing derisively. Though he could not distinguish the words, he guessed they spoke of the attack to come, and the ease with which they would repel it. He knew not how long he waited for some diversion that might offer a chance for action. It seemed eternity. At length one of the three rose yawning; then another.

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"Time to relieve Gaucelm and Fermelin!" the first spoke. "*Peste!* It will be cold down there!"

He moved toward the stair, followed by the second who had risen. That only one man should be left on duty in the guard-room was natural; with the prisoners supposedly secured, and no enemy within the walls, no more were needed. And the expectation of Simon's attack made it advisable to spare no more men from the walls.

Pierre shrank back into the dark stair-mouth, to let the two men pass him. The first brushed his face with his cloak. Then the second was near, feeling for the first few steps and cursing the darkness. His voice guided Pierre's hand to the fellow's mouth, whose astounded gasp was muffled by strong fingers. Pierre's other hand found the soldier's waist and lifted him high in air. Before he could cry out, he was hurled down the stair-well with terrific force. A choking curse and the crash of mail on stone!

With all of Pierre's strength to speed his fall, the second man-at-arms had struck the first at the turn of the stair, and both hurtled against the stone with terrific force. Pierre was after them as they landed; one lay still, the other groaned. But in a moment, the latter, his first agony subsiding, started to cry out; and Pierre's fist struck the life from his body, barely in time to make the cry incoherent.

Even so, the third man came running down from the guard-room. His failure to give the alarm showed how far he was from suspecting more than an accident. Pierre thrust out a foot as he passed, and he too fell headlong. But his fall was softened by the bodies of his comrades; and it was plain that he knew he had been tripped, for he came up full of fight.

Pierre heard the swish of a sword leaving its scabbard; and, fearing a shout that would alarm the garrison, leaped upon him with his knife. He felt the hot scratch of the sword on his cheek as his dagger plunged. Then, descending, he dragged the three corpses away, and locked them too in the cell that had been his.

"Two more will serve!" thought Pierre, with an eye to armor for all his little company.

He wondered, however, as he returned to the empty guard-room, how he should find two victims more, without perhaps finding too many. But he had no need to find others. He discovered chests of arms in the guard-room, and helped himself to both mail and swords. His only trouble was to find a hauberk that would fit his mighty shoulders; fortunately there was one that would slip on him, though it gave his arms something less than full play. A helmet he must do without for the present. So he descended the stairs, his booty in his arms.

The cramps had now left the limbs of his fellows, and their hearts were glad enough to see him, still safe, and armed. Quickly he drew them into the cell where his captives lay, with their armor waiting but to be stripped off. In brief space the Toulousans were armed and equipped.

"Now follow me," Pierre ordered. "Make no noise."

Softly they stole up through the guard-room, mounted the stairs above, and stood on the landing before the entrance to the great hall.

"Five of you have helmets, and may hold this stair," Pierre instructed them. "If any pass you, ye will be taken in the dark for men of the garrison, and perhaps ordered to the ramparts. If so, obey. Ye will not be recognized in the night. But at the least alarm or uproar, run down to the gate, and wait there for me. Giles and I, who have no helmets, will set to work in the hall."

Now began the nerve-racking part of Pierre's vigil. He had important work to do, but must time it to tally with an event he could not closely time—Simon's arrival with the Toulousan host. As nearly as he could compute, it still lacked an hour and a half to midnight. He knew old Simon well enough to count on his arrival at the precise hour set.

Quietly he thrust aside the hanging and entered the hall. It was empty; but some quick ear detected his approach, for a face was thrust through a door that Pierre guessed led to the kitchens. At sight of an armored man—whose features were indistinct in the light of a few scattered torches—the head withdrew. Pierre smiled, knowing that to a servant he must seem—since he was armed—one of the garrison.

He sat down, Giles beside him, and deliberately let the greater part of an hour pass. His men he was sure would avoid discovery, since if seen they would merely

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be sent to the walls; his only fear was that some officer might come down to the hall. But there was little chance of this either, the whole garrison being certainly on the ramparts.

When he judged it time, he strode to the kitchen door, and tapped, stepping back quickly where the light would not fall on his face. When a servant appeared, he commanded—this time careful to imitate the guttural Norman dialect:

"Bring fagots. Our lord commands a fire."

In a few minutes the kitchen knaves staggered in with logs, shavings, and light-wood; and one applied a torch. Till they had gone, Pierre kept his face turned away.

In a little while the fire was leaping merrily. A glance toward the closed kitchen door reassured him; but for a little while he continued to watch. Then with a quick command to Giles he swiftly lifted one bench after another to the fire, measuring the distance to the dim ceiling as close as he could guess. Understanding, Giles set to work busily; and the two men lost no time in making above the flames a pyramid of benches and boards from the loose-topped tables.

When the bonfire towered as high as Pierre could reach, he flung dry rushes from the floor upon it. These caught greedily. In a moment the fire was a menacing mass of upward-shooting flame, a pillar of destruction in the center of the hall. Even now it licked the dry beams of the ceiling. The arrow-slits on the two long sides of the room gave excellent draft. The beams began to char odorously, then give off sparks and glow. It crackled fiercely now; soon it would roar so loud that the servants in the kitchens would know it was something greater than a mere hearth-fire.

Pierre slipped out to the stairway. His five men waited still.

"No one has come," one whispered.

Pierre blessed his luck, though indeed it would have been strange if any had left the ramparts when an assault was expected.

"Two of you go to the ramparts," Pierre ordered. "Mingle with the garrison, but do not speak. When first ye hear or see Simon's approach, steal down and tell me."

Two glided away; but before they could reach the stair, the bray of a trumpet reached them through the arrow-slots. A clash of iron followed, and the shouting of near a thousand men.

"Bide here," Pierre cautioned. "Simon has come. Good man! He obeys my order to make a noise and keep aloof at first. Wait a little till yonder beams blaze beyond quenching."

For perhaps five minutes they waited, while the fire swelled in volume, and the acrid smoke stung in their nostrils. The roar of the blaze now rose high. The servants, roused at last, poured in from the kitchen; but the sight of armed men sent them back, yelling their alarm.

"None will hear them," Pierre chuckled. "Simon makes too much din. One moment more, and we succeed!"

He burst out coughing, in a billow of enveloping smoke.

"Now!" he wheezed. "You, Giles, up that stair and to the battlements! Cry, 'Fire!' In the alarm that follows, none will think to examine your face. Take care to be first in the rush down the stair, and get to the gate as fast as you may. We shall be there before you."

A TONGUE of flame, sucked out by the draft from the stair-well, reached out at Pierre's heels as he fled down the stairs. He and his companions had scarce crossed the bailey when a cry of wild alarm told them that Giles had fulfilled his errand. From the courtyard Pierre looked back, to see black smoke outlined by lurid flames pouring out of the arrow-slots, and heard the yells and the running feet of men in terror.

He reached the great gate just as a surging mass of men, with all the momentum of their descent from the tower behind them, piled up in the guard-room gate. Their struggles to get out were frightful; their mail grated as their bodies jammed together, and their shrieks proved how close the flames were to the unlucky ones in the rear. But they soon won through for the gate was none so narrow, and erupted into the courtyard.

Their alarm set the men on the bailey walls into like panic. Until the first wild cry burst forth, these had had eyes only for the noisy host of Simon that clamored at the base of the cliff, just out of spear and arrow-shot. But when the tumult from the burning tower reached their ears, they turned to see flames shooting out of the arrow-slots, and curling up to lick the stones.

Then their own terror drove them from

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the walls. They ran down into the court at top speed, their shouts swelling the din. There was much pitch and oil stored in drums in the tower, for use in siege; and well the bandits knew that, once the conflagration reached the inflammable stuff, the explosion would hurl the tower walls outward in an avalanche of stone that would crush all it struck; and flying brands would kindle all the combustibles stored in the casernes.

The pandemonium within the outer walls was horrible. The entire garrison, quite two hundred strong, swirled about the gate, or struggled to get nearer to it. What armies could not have done to demolish their morale, the cry of "Fire!" had done at once. Pierre had enlisted on his side the one invincible ally. With no means of fighting flames but water borne all the way from the cistern, bucket by bucket; with no escape save through the main gate in the outer wall, and a small sally-port in its rear, the garrison had to choose between the flames and the possible mercies of Simon and his host outside.

The choice was quickly taken. The first to reach the great gate—even had it been Red Hugo himself—would have thrown it open rather than wait to be burned inside. But the first there was Pierre, who had planned for this moment. His strong arms wrestled with the great bars, threw them aside, and, backed by the weight of his six companions, flung it wide.

A wild shout from the foot of the cliff bore witness to the savage joy with which the Toulousan host saw the flames and the flight of the garrison. A wild clamor filled the night, made up of the cries of the terrified bandits, the roaring joy of the assailants, and the clang of nine hundred mail hauberks as their wearers rushed up the undefended slope that led to the gate.

But just outside that gate Pierre waited, his keen eyes flickering over every man that fled the flames. The foremost of the Toulousan advance was almost up the hill when that which he waited for came—Red Hugo helmetless, but still clutching his sword; fiery mane flashing in the greater fire of the burning castle.

Pierre's hand seized him as he burst through, swung him off his feet, and set him down against the wall.

"On guard!" Pierre cried. "I have longed for this!"

A moment Hugo stared, bewildered; then he struck out with a savage oath. As Pierre's blade met his a voice bellowed:

"Ha! Pierre! Well done!"

But Pierre neither turned nor answered. His eyes were on Red Hugo, his sword flashing about Red Hugo's head. Twice he struck, three times; and the fourth blow shore the bandit's head from his shoulders.

Scarce a drop of blood, save Hugo's, was shed in the brief flurry that followed. The garrison had but one thought; escape from the flames. That escape was granted them by the opening of the gate. Little they cared then that they ran into the hands of a host too great for them to fight in the open.

As Pierre wiped his blade dry, his own men-at-arms were binding the captives, who had no more will to resist than so many sheep. Then, as he looked on with a smile of triumph, Old Simon thumped him on the back.

But Pierre pointed north.

"Come away before the brands fly," he commanded. "Who is that you have there, Simon? Why, 'tis Bertrand of Armagnac! Unbind him; he is a knight. Sound the trumpet!"

As the long column swung down the hill, Pierre looked back toward burning Tarascon. Even as he gazed, the tower fell in with a sounding crash and a great heavenward spout of flame. He turned to Simon.

"Before this time tomorrow," he said with laughter in his voice, "the troops of Aquitaine and of Barcelona will finish their race to occupy yonder castle. They will march home again with mournful faces; for they can not defend a heap of charred stones. Without the walls of Tarascon, they can not threaten Foix; without Foix, they dare not march on Toulouse. Well, we are weary, lads, but tomorrow we rest in Foix! Count Roger will be glad to purchase pardon by giving us free entry, and pardon he must have, unless my lord can find one better than he to hold his lands."

Bertrand of Armagnac, mounted between Simon and Pierre on a horse lent by a man-at-arms, spoke up sheepishly.

"Would that I might see Cercamon's face," he said. "For if, as you say, Barcelona sends a host to head ours off, it will certainly be Cercamon who leads it."

Then he smiled to himself, adding—

"But if Cercamon could see me now!"

"Ah me!" sighed Pierre. "I am sorry for Cercamon!"

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IN KAFFIR KRAALS*

The Boy Upina upon the Veld

by

Santie Sabalala

A Remarkable Account of Actual Savage Life Told by a Zulu Who Lived It

EDITOR'S NOTE—Since white men first penetrated the Black Continent there has been a constant struggle to understand the soul and psychology of the savage—to learn something of his ideals; his secret reactions to emotions, such as suspicion, rage, hunger, ambition, love; his instincts in the jungle; his apprehension of death; his animal lust for butchery in battle; his seeming callousness to pain; his extraordinary superstitions and occult powers. . . Hitherto the best that has been done was in H. H. Johnston's "History of a Slave," strung second-hand on tales told him by a Mohammedan converted from savagery. But here at last we have the curtain plainly lifted!

Santie Sabalala, a pure-blooded Fingo-Zulu, of the race that brought forth Lobengula and Chaka, the most terrible leaders of savages of whom we have any record, has boldly bared the soul of the savage. Santie Sabalala, who was taught by a friendly white man, gives an account that has no single hint of the influence of civilization or religion. It is pure savagery told by an extremely intelligent man who has come out of the kraals without forgetting anything that was magnificent, strange, horrible, or funny in the life of his own people.

His style of writing is unusually good. The scenes he portrays are extraordinarily vivid—and terrible. And altogether we believe he contributes a remarkable chapter—more absorbing than fiction—to the history of man. While the portrayal of savage life from birth to settled maturity extends through six articles, each of these articles is a complete picture in itself. This is the second of the pictures.

UPINA toiled up the hill, stopping every few moments to blow the firebrands to a red glow; then thrust them behind his back in order to protect them from the wet grass. Arriving where his companions were still eating, he demanded whether this was the place they were thinking of making an encampment He was informed no, but they would go a little farther; and so they got up and proceeded to drive the herd on, chewing the little meat that was left—not swallowing it directly but turning it over and over in their mouths, getting the uttermost taste and

* *This is an "Off-the-Trail" Article. See first contents page.*

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enjoyment out of the bits. On swallowing they would say to each other—

"*Aka! Imandi, inyama.*—My! The meat is fine."

Upina did not eat his skoff, not because he did not want to but for lack of opportunity, and because the firebrands demanded his whole attention. So the little band wended its way over the *veld*, shouting now and then at an old goat that was nibbling at an *umti wam ga*, a long-thorned tree, or throwing stones at some early birds. They went on this way till they came upon a large cluster of small-leafed bushes.

An argument arose among them, one side saying that this was the best place to rest because there was bound to be a lot of *umvundla* (hares) and *ama home* (wild pigeons), the others pointing out and objecting that there were bound to be snakes, *inyoka* and *nama dudwana*—stinging wasps. Upina clinched the whole argument by building a fire right on the spot.

The little band gathered around the fire. No matter what time of day it is you will always find natives around a fire even if there are only two of them, some haunching down on their heels, others standing up, all with their hands stretching toward the blaze. An hour or so was spent thus, the sun climbing higher and drying the dew.

Suddenly every one comes to life, as one of the half-dozen mongrel curs that have been brought along for hunting purposes, jumps up with a bark and streaks off at something that is invisible for the moment, while the other curs chase behind him. The little band fire questions at each other.

"*Hi nto? Hi nto?*"

Excitedly they pick up their sticks and *sigwembas* and run fleetly after the dogs. Here, there, the dogs careen madly over the *veld*, yelping all the while. Some one catches sight of the quarry the dogs are after and in a voice filled with the hunter's joy he yells—

"*Umvundla—umvundla—izani.*—A hare—it's a hare—come on."

The hare doubles this way and that way, the dogs work their thin shoulders in the mad chase, with their tongues hanging out. The hare leaps high in the air, turns around quickly as it lands on its feet, making straight to where the band of boys is coming toward the chase. The dogs attempt to overtake the hare by making a quick turn, but only fall over themselves. Separating, they stream after the hare, which with both ears standing straight up and eyes bulging, gallops in a dead straight line. In its panic it does not see the other enemies who crave its life, six yards away, and a volley of sticks cut across its path—*vuuku, vuuku qam, qam.* The hare races in a circle, lies down, and the muscles twitch as it "kicks off" in its death throes.

The boys run forward, claiming that each one has hit it, voices rise in heated argument. Above all this shouting one voice makes itself heard and it is Upina, who commands every one to get his stick or *asigwēmba* that he threw.

They act on the suggestion and the sticks are examined. One and only one had some fur and a little blood on it. That decides it and the boy with the blood and fur on his stick claims the dead, yet warm, hare. The dogs trot up to the little band, their tongues hanging out and breathing fast.

Suggestions and hints are put forward that they eat the hare right away. The killer of the hare rolls his eyes and remarks—

"*Ngum vundla wam.* It's my hare."

They started on an unorganized hunting trip. They had only gone a few yards when they caught sight of *ntaka ye mbusi*—honey-bird. They almost held their breaths, for there are many legends connected with the *ntaka ye mbusi;* it is said if he takes a dislike to you he will lead you to a lion or *izi gebengeni*—wood goblins. Just then the honey-bird caught sight of them and flew toward them, fluttering closely over their heads and swooping gently to earth a few feet away from them, twittering in a soft inviting way.

Undecided the boys stood uneasily on one foot, then on the other foot. The honey-bird took wing and flew a little farther on. The boys took courage, or possibly their stomaches urged them on. They followed the honey-bird, which always kept just a few feet ahead of them, sometimes dropping and waiting for them till they were almost within touching length of it. Yet never did they attempt to touch or molest it in any way.

Twittering it would fly above their heads as if urging them to go farther, swoop forward, flutter and hang in the air, sheer away gently to right and then to the left—dip flutter, hang, slip and swoop down and swoop up. It led the boys on, on, whither

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they knew not. Once one of the crowd raised the query as to how they would quiet the *nyosi* when they got there.

"Why, by *umlilo*," he was informed.

"Yes, but where was the *umlilo?*"

They had not brought any. Upina being the "fire carrier" was sent back to get some firebrands while the crowd waited for him on that very spot. Upina started back on a dog trot, humming a grunt song to make him cover the distance quicker.

The bird became alarmed as the delay lengthened and twitteringly begged and pleaded with them to follow it even going so far as to try and land on one of the boys' heads which did not reassure him, as his companions remarked that he would be raving mad by nighttime.

AFTER a while Upina was seen emerging from behind a growth of trees coming at a dog trot, and grunting hard as he ran swiftly toward them with one hand behind him protecting the firebrands. They immediately resumed their wandering, led by the honey-bird. The bird half reluctantly took the air for it had been feeling sulky because the boys would not follow it. Flying as before, it kept a few feet in front of them, until suddenly it shot away and was lost to sight.

The boys again caught sight of it. It was fluttering in one place. They broke into a run, all their timidity and suspicions forgotten. They came upon a wide hole beehive which once upon a time must have been the nest of a *bo boyi* for it was a kind of hole in the ground and the bees hummed in and out as they laid up food for the coming of Winter. The dogs, expecting some kind of game, stuck their muzzles into the hole and were rewarded by being stung, and went off ki-yiing loudly and licking their wounded members copiously.

Dry twigs were quickly gathered, also some green ones. A fire was started just in front of the hole. The flames were allowed first to become a blaze and then the green twigs were thrown on to make a dense smoke which was fanned into the hole and overcame the bees; but this was not accomplished until four or five of the boys had been stung by the bees, mostly around the face and the shoulders.

The coals were raked out of the way and the boys reaped their reward by inserting an arm in the hole and bringing out bunches upon bunches of oozy syrupy dripping corn-colored honey. This being wild honey, it was not in combs.

They ate and gorged themselves, till they were positively sated with honey.

The little honey-bird got his reward by the scraps that were thrown away from time to time and later had a regular feast when the boys left, rather unsteadily. The honey-bird had brought them there because of what he would be able to pick up afterward and counted the day well spent, in his twittering way.

Having gorged themselves on honey the boys retraced their way back to the forest in order to seek the deep cool shade and an *idinga* to drink and swim in. Having arrived there they squabbled and scrambled among themselves as to who should be first to drink. Finally the eldest boy settled the whole argument by hitting every one in his way on the flank, remarking—

"*Sukani, ni ngaba ntuwana.*—Get out of the way, you are only children." He was only about nine or ten years old himself.

He got down on his hands and knees and lowered his mouth to the surface of the pool; but instead of drinking, he gazed keenly at the reflection on the water made by the leaves on the trees, and then looked up, first on one side, then on the other side overhead, after which he again stooped down to drink, blowing hard at the scum that was in spots on the water. He took a long, long drink, until it seemed as if his already tight drawn stomach, full from eating honey, would burst.

Each of the five quenched his thirst, and then stood up, flung his *ninja* aside and splashed or dived into the larger pool, a little lower down than the one they had been drinking from.

When the eldest boy of the group had gazed so long and earnestly at the reflection on the water, he had been looking for *umlambo*—this being the spirit that inhabits the water and is able to turn itself into any shape it so desires, even into water. It is fond of lying in wait for persons or animals at drinking pools, and, should it take a fancy to any living thing, it waits until he is in the drinking position, then pulls him suddenly into the water by the neck, and carries him to its lair, where it does things to the limbs, so its captive will never be a land creature again.

In looking around overhead from side to

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side, Mazalen—that being the boy's name, meaning "the last one," his father having so declared just before he was born; hence the departure from form, which happens not infrequently, as some are named "not wanted," "one too many," and "very ugly"—in looking around, Mazalen was looking not for spirits but for something held in just as much awe and detested and loathed at the same time, that is, *inyoka yum ti*, or tree snake, which generally has its habitation around a water-hole or pool and is rather amphibious in that it is a good diver. Rarely does it swim on top of the water, but simply pops up amidst the swimmers. This is the reason why most natives go through the performance that has just been described above.

THE boys swam with much thrashing of water with their feet using preferably the "dog paddle" instead of the over-arm stroke, though the latter is used in certain instances, such as when getting out of the way of a swimming hippopotamus, or when a canoe upsets and crocodiles hungrily swarm and endeavor to devour its unfortunate late occupants.

The dogs barked on the bank of the pool; those that were not afraid got into the water and seemingly enjoyed themselves.

A shout—

"*Inyoka!*"

The water was set to boiling as the boys one and all, with bulging eyes, thrashed their way to the bank, scrambling and panting ashore. Each one made for his bundle of clothes and picked up a stick, and, wherever one was visible, a stone, with cries of—

"*Ipi? Ipi inyaka?*"

The boy who had seen it pointed with a shaking hand up among the leaves of a certain tree. A volley of stones and sticks was sent hurling toward that branch.

"*Na tsiyal Na tsiya,*" they cried as a blue-brown something streaked up the limb of the tree and shot across from one branch to the branch of another tree, with much faster ease than the befurred flying squirrel.

With yells, the little brown boys pursued it. It was for a second or two lost to sight, and then one of the dogs came galloping toward them yelping and frothing at one and the same time. They gathered around it inquiring—

"*Lunye ndow nina?*—Where has it been bitten?"

They were able to discover very quickly the bite in the leg, for that member of the dog's body was already swelling and the dog's life almost beyond hope even should it get the attention that it needed, which was not possible under the circumstances, for the bite of an African snake, especially the smaller ones, that is, less than eight feet, is very deadly. A person must get immediate attention or relief within ten minutes after being bitten, otherwise he is dead within twenty minutes after he has been attacked.

The elder natives in a case of snake bite either cut a large slice of the flesh around where the fang marks of the snake can be seen and "draw" some nicotine from one of the pipes with the aid of a dried piece of grass from the stem and smear it on the raw surface of the wound, which has a tendency to draw out the poison. That the nicotine does not overcome the patient is a very remarkable thing, yet if the case is taken in time and this first aid rendered, the subject is able to live and soothing herbs are applied which are more acceptable than nicotine.

Here again is something presented for far more and better informed minds in medical science than mine to consider—the native's inborn stoicism and a power of will no man has been able to fathom.

The other treatment is to take two hands and hold them tightly on the opposite sides of the fang marks, and then suck the virus out, first making sure that the teeth are sound so as not to be infected, and spitting out each mouthful after sucking. In the meantime a fire is made and wood is piled high till there is a great blaze. The victim is taken near the fire, a red-hot brand is taken out and applied to the fang marks.

The living flesh sizzles and shrinks up at the touch of the heat. After that the victim or patient is placed near the fire—so near that the hairs on that part of his body are shriveled. The sweat pours off him.

When it is judged that *ilanga* will not work in, the patient is taken farther back from the fire, the limb tied at the top and bottom of the bite with native thongs made either of withes or the hides of oxen that have been killed before for some great feast and soothing herbs are applied—either by the witch doctor or by his special direction.

During all this time the patient does not

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utter a groan or a word of protest at the pain inflicted on his body, incredible to the civilized mind, but he has been taught ever since he could understand anything that he is an *umkosa* and an *umkosa* never cries. This is the creed that the children are brought up by and that they live and die by. Pain in any form is something for them to laugh at, but there is sympathy in their makeup also.

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The dog's leg and body was swelling to horrible proportions and the crowd of boys looked on helplessly. Of a sudden one of them shouted—

"*Lumka ntsiya.*—Look out, there it is!"

With head clear off the ground and zigzagging swiftly was the *inyoka* coming toward them. Some of the boys, panic-stricken, jumped into the water; one shinned up a tree; and the others just vanished into the shade of the trees. The *inyoka* came upon the swollen dog, stopped, and, opening his jaws wide, bit the dying cur once, twice, and a third time, driving his fangs deep, after which it seemed satisfied.

It made its way to the pool. As the *inyoka* slid down the bank into the water the boys in the water scrambled hotly out on the opposite side. The others, who had run into the forest, came out and seeing their companions scrambling out arrived at certain conclusions. Therefore they picked up stones and sticks and ran toward the pool and as they were able to make out the form of the *inyoka* swimming under water, which had become very muddy and dirty because of the events that had just happened, they threw their stones and sticks at it and managed to hit it once or twice.

One of the lads struggled to the edge of the bank with an *ibogato* (rock) and heaved it at the spot where the *inyoka* was to be seen for the moment. With a tremendous splash it hit the water, spraying those on the bank and making many circular waves. When the water became quieter the *inyoka* could be seen swimming in a circle, its neck on one side and tiny bubbles coming to the surface.

It swam thus for a few seconds and then slowly curled its head toward its body and turned over on its back exposing its body to the sun that shone faintly through the trees. The boys on each side of the bank looked on with their eyes wide open.

At last one of them suggested getting it out; but the question arose as to who would go in and bring it out, for was not the water by now full of *tsef* (poison) from the *inyoka's* fangs? So after much argument and a near fight, two or three long old dried-up branches were found and the *inyoka* fished out and flung on the bank.

The boys crowded around it, jostling each other in their nakedness; the *inyoka* contorted itself in the last throes of death and the tail twitched this way and that way, which, according to the natives, is the reptile's way of cursing its assassins. They looked at one another questioningly, until Mazalen asked the boy next to him—

"*Ngu makula wako lo?*—Is this your grandmother?"

"*Hayi, kini yo.*—No, of course not."

He looked at the next boy who shook his head negatively. The third boy remarked—

"*Noko a ndazi i fana no buuli wam.*—I am not sure; it looks a little bit like my dead brother." For be it known the natives believe intensely in the transmigration of souls. The dead person's soul is supposed to become an animal, a reptile, a stone or a tree.

A woman who has sadly lost one of her children will one day come into the community breathless from her trip in the woods where she has been gathering wood for the fire in her particular hut, and will relate to all the other women present how in going past a certain tree a voice had spoken to her asking to stop a moment and on doing so the said tree had patted her on the back and had taken the load off her head and carried it for her, walking beside her until they

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reached the edge of the *kraal* when the tree had put the load of wood carefully on her head and said goodby in the voice of her departed son.

She will describe the tree, telling just where it is situated and on what particular path, and it comes to pass that when any one or a band of people go past that particular tree they salute it, some cheerfully, others affrightedly, and others in veneration making an obeisance and bowing low. Hence the lines in a certain hymn that say:

> The heathen in his blindness
> Bows down to wood and stone——

And this is why the boys did not "kill" the *inyoka* until every one present was sure it was no relation of his. The rest of the boys replied "no" as to whether it was any relation of any of them, after which they beat the *inyoka's* head to pulp and severed it from the body; for a reptile is not dead until the head is off the body. To try to convince a native otherwise would be futile.

THE sun was past the meridian, and the cattle, goats and sheep had not been watered. Some one had to go and drive them to the brackish pool, and as none of the crowd was eager to volunteer, they sat themselves in a ring and played the ever popular game of *ceya*.

One of them stood in the center of the ring with a piece of wood no larger than a match or toothpick, which he held lightly between the forefinger and thumb of each hand. The others had similar pieces, varying in size.

This game in civilized terms might be named heads-and-tails, for the man in the ring and the first man on the floor whom he starts with, "break" or let go simultaneously one end of the stick, retaining it in whichever hand he thinks his opponent will hold his.

Just before the game starts, the man standing up in the ring announces that he is either *kohla* (heads) or *nene* (tails). If he is "heads" those sitting down are "tails." Being heads, he attempts to have his bit of wood in the hand opposite to his opponent's bit; that is, if it is in his right hand it has to be in his opponent's left hand for him to win. Should it fall in the break, he says, "*Bam!*" which gives him that break. If his opponent says "*Bam!*" first, he wins the break. The one in the ring has to win "heads" straight three times.

If he beats the first man, he goes to the second. Should the second beat the man in the ring, the man in the ring has to go back to the first man, and if beaten there goes to the third man, and, should he beat him, goes again to first; beats first, beats second, passes third and tries fourth and on down the line till he beats them all—and does not have to go and water the herd.

The game is intensely exciting, for it calls for very quick decision by both parties, as the breaks are fast, the hand without the bit is extended, and the fingers opened just for an instant. There is no chance for cheating, but one has to have a very quick eye to note where the piece is hid since some slyly put it in the crotch of the thumb; or, if they have a large stick—for all that it matters a person may make his piece his own foot—a graceful insinuating break will easily win.

The main idea is anticipating the other fellow's break, in "heads" left to right or right to left always, in "tails" right from right or left from left. When the other man has it in his left hand the man in the ring also has it in his left hand if he wants to win; however, one may change as often as the breaks occur.

It came round to Upina's turn to be "the man in the ring" and with a flashing smile he took his position, explaining to them he was *kohla* (heads). He swung his clasped thumbs above his head and brought them half way down to his chest and "broke" with an exclamatory grunt, "*Isa!*" that goes with the game. Flinging out his left hand an instant to show it was empty, he noted at the same time the other's empty hand, which was the left, giving the first break against him. Another clasping, this time with his left arm thrust back and the right crooked as if to deliver a blow.

"*Ndim,*" he grunted. He broke and won. Another clasping of the thumbs and he struck another pose—the native is a born actor. A grunt as the break came, giving him two, and one to go. Another break, but he was out-guessed. Another break and again he was beaten. A still further break and he stopped the other boy's lead. The other boys, watching the two, urged them on with cries:

"*Hamba makwedini mbo mbo gaa.*—Go on, you fellows; that's the son of high bird."

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The breaks became fast and furious, and Upina, having tried hard not to be beaten, though beaten at the start, went the round of the ring with his morale very low. Consequently he had to go and water the herds of sheep, goats and cattle. With the wonderful and inexplicable instinct of the native, he set his course in the direction where the cattle, goats and sheep were and without any difficulty whatsoever found them, although the distance was great, and drove them all (some three hundred in number) to a muddy pool or pond that could be seen on the *veld* some distance away.

The other boys looked up at the sun and at the lengthening shadows and calculated the time and bethought themselves as to what they would eat that night, though the natives in the *kraal* only eat once in twenty-four hours. The native boy and his civilized young brother are very much alike in that they both are very fond of their stomachs.

All the time they had been in the depth of the forest the distant cry of *isqennene* (parrots) could be heard, and some *hombes* (turtle doves) billing and cooing. The chattering monkeys overhead came half way down the trunks of the trees in order to see what manner of beast was this that came into the forest, yet had no fur on it. The boys threw sticks and stones at them, sometimes hitting the young baby monkeys riding pick-a-back on their mother's back.

One of the boys quickly made a bow by tying both ends of a stick with the sinew string that had held his beads around his neck and which he had broken for the making of the bow. Not having any arrows he picked up one of his companion's sticks—a slender one—and set it against the sinew string, the heavier part resting on the bow of the stick, supported with the fork of the first and second fingers. He took aim and pulled—a little too hard—for the sinew broke and the bow stick straightened and thwacked a companion who happened to be standing in front of him. The boy who had just been hit turned round in a high temper demanding:

"*U cinga nti yi nto nina umti?*—What do you think I am—a tree?" And they clinched, with heads bent, each trying to butt the other's jaw out of joint. The other boys took hardly any notice of them but watched the monkeys. A mother monkey slid down the trunk of a tree with a baby monkey on its back, curious to see what the two boys were doing. The boys not fighting watched the pair warily, picked up their sticks, and with a yell ran toward them, throwing their sticks at the mother.

The surprized mother monkey looked up and saw them, started to gallop on hands and feet for the tree, gained it, but had hardly started to climb its trunk when the boys caught up with her and grabbed hold of her tail. With a human-like voice the mother monkey shrieked and screamed. The baby monkey joined in and the crowd of other monkeys overhead chattered, scolded and pulled faces. Some broke the rotten limbs of trees and threw them down.

The boys tugged and tugged at the monkey mother's tail but she kept her hold on the tree. At last they braced their feet against the root of the tree and gave a mighty pull. The monkey was dislodged and fell with a thud to the ground. The baby monkey was shaken off its mother's back by the fall.

No sooner had the mother hit the ground than she picked herself up and bit and scratched the boys in turn, who had lost their hold on her tail. The other two boys left off their fighting and came over to help subdue and kill the monkey mother, but collided with their friends as they tried to get away from the infuriated monkey.

The noise overhead was deafening as the monkeys leaped from limb to limb and shook the branches of trees in their excitement. Others threw down twigs and leaves and some broke off green leaves and put them in their mouths, chewing for a while and spitting them out in a second or two nervously.

HAVING routed the boys, the mother monkey made a bound for the tree, climbed up the limb swiftly and reached the top in a few seconds, forgetting her offspring who was sitting on its tail with two black paws over its eyes crying in a very heart-breaking manner. The other monkeys seemingly called the mother's attention to the predicament of her offspring.

Before she could make a move a large dark-gray baboon coughed in that "coughy-bark" that all *infenes* have, and, swinging easily, lowered himself down to the ground, walked on all fours to the crying baby monkey, sniffed him first at his head, then at the back of his neck, pulled his little tail around his little feet and with an enormous

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paw got hold of the infant monkey by the back of his neck and put his muzzle close to the infant monkey's mouth so that the little one took his paws away from his eyes.

The *infene* worked his jaws and from the "food pouch" that is in his cheeks he brought to the front of his mouth a small-sized ear of corn that had been stolen the day before out of some native field and fed the baby monkey by simply letting it bite a little at a time while it held one end in its muzzle.

The baboon's patience was not very long and the din overhead, though not so loud as a few moments before, was loud enough. The baboon began to grunt under its breath trying to coax the baby monkey to get on his back by lying down on his side with his back toward the baby monkey, but the infant monkey only knew one back and that was its mother's back. So while the baboon lay on its side grunting to the infant monkey to get on its back one of the boys left the group and ran toward the *idinga* where they had been swimming earlier in the afternoon to fetch the dead body of the *inyoka* and trap the baboon with it.

On coming back with it the boy laid the cold body of the *inyoka* across the neck of the *infene*. The *infene* strained its eyes and raised its head a little and caught sight of what had been put around its neck, and raised an uncanny howl, like a dog baying at a full moon—only worse than that.

The *inkows* on the branches of the trees hushed their chatter and stole away frightened as they caught sight of the *inyoka* around the *infene's* neck. The boys enjoyed a very hearty laugh at the sight of the *infene* howling at the top of his voice, almost paralyzed with fright. The baby monkey at first seemed rather surprized at the noise made by the *infene*, but being busy eating what it had been fed by the baboon from its food pouches in its cheeks, it soon got over its first surprize.

When it had chewed and taken out of its mouth and smelt what it had been fed, it then put it in again and swallowed the morsels of *poots-nguenye* and *ma-bly*—prickly pears. It hopped over to the howling *infene* and felt of its muzzle as if it would coax more food out of those pouches, but the only thing that came out of its mouth was a terrified yell. The boys got up and picked up their sticks and put on their *nciyos* and flung their *bayis* over their arms.

One of them walked over to the howling *infene*, gave it a kick, and picked up the baby monkey; and the group laughing wended their way in the deep shade of the forest, for the afternoon was late. The branches overhead bent and swayed as the baby monkey's mother followed them, her beady brown eyes never having lost sight of her offspring during all this time.

She moaned to herself and sometimes chattered madly, but mostly just kept a little behind the group as they made their way in and out of the faint paths in the twilight of the forest on their way to the *taffa—veld*. They emerged from it at last and called to Upina to bring *imiti umlilo* (firebrands) as they had something good to eat. Though a quarter of a mile away, he heard and received the message quite clearly, the air being so clear.

The waiting group passed the time by picking out and pointing at the different parts of the baby monkey's anatomy they each desired, some going so far as to try and pinch off the fur on the desired spot, at which the baby monkey squealed with pain. The mother ran around the group making a cry between a growl and moan. Her offspring tried once or twice to go to her but the boys prevented it.

After a while Upina arrived with the *umlilo*, looking rather lumpy as he had been stung in two or three places on his face and body, for they had left the firebrands by the wild-bees' hive earlier in the day. Upina's temper was not improved when he caught sight of the size of the baby monkey. He wanted to know how the whole lot of them could feed off the baby monkey and feel full. They argued with him, showing him how fat it was and at last pointed to the mother loping around them. Upina remarked that they had not caught her as yet, which silenced them.

The fire was made, a sharp stone was found, and, with the jagged edge, they cut the throat of the baby monkey. The young thing screeched until the birds woke up in the forest. The mother was unable to understand what ailed her little one, but with the mother love uppermost, she sprang into the midst of the boys and bit and scratched and tore at them in a wild fury that at first scattered them.

Getting over their surprize, they picked up sticks and stones and set to on the mother monkey, breaking her ribs, smashing

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her arms and hands and crushing her head with dozens of stones that they threw. There side by side almost lay mother and infant who might still have been denizens of the forest.

The boys compared injuries. Some had scratched faces, one a badly bitten arm, and others bad scratches on their heads and ears. They rubbed earth on them, this being the native's "first aid" when other means are not at hand. It seems to do the work intended.

The sharp and jagged stone was again brought into use, and skinning of the baby monkey began. The fur around the neck was cut all the way round and then all the fur around the joint of the wrist and also around the feet just above the ankle bone. The tail was slit from tip to stem on the under side. The reason for cutting this way is that monkey hides mostly are made into *inxowa*—a bag or hold-all.

The thumbs of each hand were set against the neck just resting on the shoulders, the hide was pulled down by the forefingers and held tightly. One of the boys held the head and with a steady pull the furry hide came off the white body with the hairy face as neat as could be wished, even to the tail. The same thing was repeated with the mother of the infant monkey. The hides were flung over a near bush, the boys not having any salt or fat to cure them. They cut into strips the flesh of the monkeys and had a royal feast.

Finishing, they sat around the fire for a little while. From the distance could be heard the howl of the *infene* with the dead snake around his neck—other sounds, too, a herd of elephants crashing through on their way to the drinking hole, a rhinoceros shaking his single nose-horn, the hooting of an owl.

The first dew wave blew down and the air became colder. Three of the boys decided they would stay by the fire; another, after first carefully feeling and looking around for snakes, lay down with his feet toward the fire. Another informed the group he knew where an *umxuma* (cliff hole) was and left them to go there. The cattle stamped and thudded their feet a distance away, a goat coughed in a very human way, the stars blinked in their billions in the sky, and the boys slept.

THE early dawn came with the swirls of mist that are always so common near the rainy season. The three boys sleeping together near what had been a fire, stirred and turned over, mumbling and chewing nothing, as is common with most native boys when asleep. A terrific thudding broke the comparative quiet, with the loud and frightened lowing of the herd of cattle and the high tenor-like "mbaa" of the goats, and above all a deep snarling hoarse cough-bark which brought the three boys bolt upright looking at each other with wide staring eyes, for that coughy bark with a snarl meant *ingomyama* (lions) among the herds of cattle and goats.

The thudding sound was the herd stampeding, goring each other badly in the dark in efforts to get away from the king of the forest and jungles. The goats kept up a continual bleating, which told its own story, for the *ingomyamas* were slaughtering them, not wantonly, but because they were in the way. The air was filled with the nasal, "*nya-nya-nya-nyaa*"—laughter of the jackals and hyenas who stood a way off waiting until the chase was over and they could eat the leavings.

With chattering teeth Mazalen got up and motioned to the other two to follow him as he wrapped his bark *bayi* about him, going almost at a run, with the other two close behind him with their hunting sticks in their hands. They came to the edge of the *qina*, where in the faint light of the dawn they could see the shadowy forms of the herd as they milled and billowed over each other. Three or four streaks ran around them, darting here and there, standing on strong hind legs with paws on some ox vainly trying to bring one down as the sharp horns came in contact with the body of a lion or lioness.

The mist rolled away, the light became stronger. The lion, a little larger than a full-grown calf with his strong, shaggy mane, made a leap at the back of one of the cows, bit into her shoulders till they cracked, dug his sharp claws in and by sheer strength pulled her down. His gratified "*ngroomff*" brought the lionesses around him and his prey. The cow bellowed loudly in her pain, which brought the herd toward them.

A few feet away the leaders stopped short. With distended nostrils and legs wide apart,

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heads lowered, they stood, for the lion and the three lionesses challenged the whole herd with bared teeth, bodies rigid, tails twitching from side to side, making deep-throated growls. They stood thus for a short space. A young steer took fright at something, shied away. This startled the whole herd and in an instant it swung round and stampeded across the wide open *veld*.

The lion sneezed, sunk his teeth into the now almost dead cow, closed his jaws, and with a swift motion of his head lifted the body almost clear of the ground, the legs only not quite clearing, and set off on a trot toward the forest—not unlike a dog with a choice morsel in his mouth. The lionesses followed the lion.

It may be stated here that the African oxen or cow is not very large, standing just a bit higher than the Shetland cattle, being quite as hardy if not hardier, with wonderful curving horns; while the lion in his jungle growth is a much bigger specimen than what is seen in the zoological gardens in civilization. He attains a growth that corresponds to that of an almost full-grown calf. Added to that is the fact of his tremendous strength and the extra development around his neck which evidences itself in the growth of his mane. Therefore the feat of lifting a full-grown ox or cow is not so impossible as may seem at first.

The three boys watched the whole episode being acted out before their eyes with chills running up and down their spines, now and then glancing behind them to see whether any *ingomyama* had stolen on them unawares. The three boys gazed down on the shambles that the band of lions had wrought, for lying about dead were a cow or two, about half a dozen goats and a sheep. The hyenas and the jackals had already set about the work nature had intended them for, that is, scavenging. They scuffled and snarled as they tore at the dead carcasses of the animals.

The sun blazed up in the east and the noises that go with the night died away. The *imi celu* (*veld* birds) flew about and rested on the backs of some of the herd, that had stopped running, to get their morning meal by eating *imungo*, the strange blood-sucking worm that covers and lives off the native cattle.

Upina turned to his two companions and inquired about the other two boys. They first went to the cave hole where one had said he would pass the night, and they found him wrapped tightly in his *bayi*, his knees drawn up close to his elbows. They called to him to wake up and shook him, but found that he did not respond. They looked at one another, and hands over their mouths, in awed whispers, they murmured:

"*Ufile kin! Ufile.*—He is dead! Dead!"

"*Masi tini ngoku?*—What shall we do now?" Upina inquired.

"*Funeka si embe um nxuma, size sim ncumbe.*—We must dig a hole and then bury him," answered Mazalen.

Their mouths were full of saliva at distaste of the task before them, for every native dislikes to have anything to do with a dead human body. This is because of the dread of having the dead person casting a spell over any one who has mistreated him while alive and the dread of him possibly coming to life in their hands or calling upon the people to take away the earth from above him after he has been buried.

THE three boys dug with their sticks on the hillside at some soft, mossy earth, a little way off from the cave hole where their dead companion was. A little later with their hands they fashioned a shallow grave and went back for the body. Very gingerly they plucked at it. They trod on each other's feet and one of the number tripped and fell on the dead body. Too frightened to make an outcry, he blindly scrambled up and ran, the other two following him very closely.

As they ran they cast quick glances behind them not knowing what to expect, and in one of these back glances the leader tripped over a bush and the other two, unable to stop in time, fell on top of him. Breathing heavily they rolled away from each other and sat up quickly looking about fearfully, their chins and chests wet with saliva that had been flowing freely and unconsciously.

They sat a while and Mazalen remarked:

"*Ukuba asim ncumbi ku sasa nge, uyaku tyima zi ncuka*"—If we don't bury him this morning, the hyenas will eat him." And with that they got to their feet and very slowly and reluctantly made their way back to the corpse. Arriving at the cave they got hold of the corpse, this time a little more determinedly, and with hurried steps took it over to the grave they had dug, deposited it there, and, as near as they could make it,

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placed it so as to face the rising sun, for the native has a belief that there will be a day when the dead will be made to live again by the *"Okulunkulu"* (The Greatest of Great), and he will call them from *eku pumene kue Langa*—from the rising of the sun.

Thus all are buried looking east in a crouching position so as to be able to jump up instantly at the call. Those who happen to be buried looking somewhere else will be too late to share at the different wonderful things that will be given that day.

Having set the body, after a fashion, looking east, they hurriedly covered it with the earth until the whole was covered except the top part of the head, so they got medium-sized stones and set them around and on top of it, after which they brought *ameva uum mga*—thorns of a certain tree, and set them on top of the whole grave. This was to safeguard it from the hyenas and jackals. Sometimes it is effective, at others not, all depending on the state of the hunger of those animals.

As to the cause of the boy's death. As has been stated, on the high altitudes the nights are cold, so cold sometimes that *iqabanga* (frost) forms. The boy, having only as a covering a piece of bark cloth, which is all very well as covering when in a sheltered spot or near a fire, and being practically out of doors and possibly not having inherited a very strong constitution —for it is a case of a survival of the fittest among the natives, especially so for the growing boy—he had practically been frozen to death. The exposure had been as severe as though it had been in the depth of winter in a temperate climate.

Finishing their gruesome task, the boys picked up their sticks, wiped their drooping mouths with their arms and hastily left the vicinity of the grave. The third member of the trio, a boy with flat eyes, full wide cheeks and long chin, whose name was Um Tabati, "The Taker"—because he grabbed hold of anything and everything in sight when a baby—voiced the common thought by saying:

"*Ydi ya kolma u Gaxa ufile naye.*—I suppose Gaxa is dead too." And even as he spoke Upina cried out:

"*Nail qekere lake.*—There is his skull." pointing to something with black, kinky hair on it. The whole three chorused:

"*Hayi masiming ke apa ku takatiwe.*—Let us go away from here; it is bewitched."

And with that they ran toward the forest, down the hillside, and even as they ran the long gruff bark of the *infene* came to them. They hurried toward the *idinga* and came upon the crying baboon still lying in the same position that they had left him the day before, with the dead *inyoka* around his neck. They sat down on the ground and laughed uproariously; the whole situation seemed to strike them as being very amusing.

On hearing the laughter, the *infene* groaned all the louder, which sent the boys into peals of laughter. After a while they were able to contain themselves and one of them suggested that they take off the snake from the *infene's* neck, but the other two wanted to wait till the morrow and so they left the *infene* with the *inyoka* around its neck. Now and then they burst out with laughter as they made their way to the trees where the *ingenye* grew and some *ma qede* (bananas)—far different from those that are eaten in civilization, for these were as long as a grown man's arm and almost as wide in the middle section as the forearm below the elbow. Upina shinnied up the *ma qede* tree, keeping a wary eye for the *si cawu* (banana spider) whose bite is deadly and who is very hard to see as he is the same color as the fruit on which he lives.

Reaching the top after a rather hard climb, he shook the nearest leaf clusters to no avail. He then shouted for one of his companions to throw him a stick. Three or four were thrown before he was able to catch one. With it in his hand and hugging the trunk of the tree closely with the left hand and legs twined tightly around it, he prodded and thrust at a cluster, and the fruit being ripe, fell in singles, pairs and sometimes bunches. His companions shouted, *"Peza"* when they judged that there was enough *ma qedes*. Upina threw the stick down and slid down the tree trunk.

It may be said that the *ma qede* tree is not a tree in the proper sense, as it is more of a fibrous growth and the trunk is made up of sections, something like the trunk of a palm-tree.

HAVING reached the ground, Upina and the other two boys divided the fruit fairly and equally among themselves and then each dragged a banana over the ground and grass two or three times, turning it over on one side, then

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on the other, as they cleaned it of all coarse matter before eating it. They broke off the stem that it had hung by with the others in the bunch, and peeled it and took a generous bite, and another and another until only about half was left, which was enough, because the real tropical *ma qede* is very rich and sweet and the taste of one is very cloying, for these are real bananas picked ripe and not the sickly yellow green ones picked "young" that one meets with in civilization.

Surfeited, the boys fashioned their *bayis* into rough baskets, put the remainder of the *ma qedes* into them and set out to hunt anything edible, so long as it was not too large for them. After a while, they decided that carrying the fruit with them was too much as it was too heavy; so they put the whole lot into a bush near by and set out once again. They came upon an open glade and from out of the shadows there sprang two or three *i bambala* (springbok). There were hunting shouts of—

"*Iyo! Na zo! Na zo! Na zo!*" The *yuku-yuke-vuke-Vui!* sounded of sticks flying in the air, a rattling clash as one hit the horns of the running game, the yelping of the dogs, the thud and patter of feet as the three boys gave chase. In and out of the bush the springboks ran with that peculiar gait that its name is derived from, although the native name is quite as descriptive, meaning "brown and white animal."

They broke on to the *veld* and the *i bambalas* veered here, veered there. If a dog got too close he was menaced by those sharp horns. The three boys maneuvered so as to drive them into a *kaldla*—a small clump of bushes, such as frequently happens on the African *veld*. The dogs galloped, breathing, "*heh — heh — heh.*" The movement succeeded, and the game turned into the direction of the bushes and dived into the clump.

Their horns caught and the dogs closed in on them. There was a tremendous amount of barking—a shortened "boar-goof!" as a sharp hoof connected with a dog's windpipe. A dog with less bark in him had a springbok by the throat; the boys came up, and making enough noise for ten men, they drove the dogs off and got hold of some of the springboks by the horns and attempted to break their necks by giving them quick twists, just as in the same manner the cowboys "throw" a steer.

Either the boys were not strong enough, or the necks of the game were stronger than they looked, for a few moments later there were yells of pain.

"*Yo togwana metunal*" A pair of sharp horns had come in contact with some one's anatomy. The noise was terrific, for the terrified game mingled their cries with the yelling of the boys and the barking of the dogs. The only one of the number who brought down or killed any game, besides the one brought down by one of the dogs, was Mazalen. This was because he was the only one who had a small dagger, and he had it because he was soon to pass the *qela la ma Nnwenkwe ama kula*—the rank, or call it class, of the bigger boys.

Members of that class are allowed to carry spears when they go on the hunt with the older men. The boys looking after the cattle are, as it were, serving their apprenticeship and testing their mettle, for later they are to be part of the *Om Kosi We Fazo* —a part of the great army of warriors who go raiding the other tribes. Therefore it is not until a boy has attained a certain class that he is permitted to carry either a dagger or a spear.

Even as the rest of the game fled, the buck just killed was kicking its last in its death throes. Upina and Tabati patted Mazalen on the back and called him *smari*, which is quite flattering. As Mazalen began to skin his buck he expertly traced a line straight from the throat past the breast bone right down to the ventril, barely just touching the flesh enough to open the top or covering of the body. The dogs were strangely quiet. Upina looked up and saw them devouring the other buck and exclaimed—

"*Sis ra sis suka, zinantoni ezi nja.—Sis ra sis* (a term of disgust). What is the matter with those dogs?"

He chased them away, throwing anything that he could get hold of at them. A few moments later he came back rather out of breath. Mazalen remarked:

"*Hamba u zise um lilowena, Upina.*—Go and get some fire, you Upina."

Upina demurred by saying that possibly there was no fire alight.

"*Hamba yoku kangela.*—Go and look," Mazalen replied; but Upina merely said—

"*Andi yi.*—I am not going," in a very decided tone. Mazalen looked up at him, then at flat-faced Umtabata, who shook his head very vigorously, signifying that he

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would not go either. Mazalen grunted and went on skinning the buck. After a long silence he remarked—

"If there is no fire we will have to eat it raw." There being no response, he further remarked—

"Kudwa ndi ya hlinza nye, ndi za ku yi teya ngo kwam.—As I am skinning it, I will eat it myself." Both Upina and Umtabata immediately challenged him by saying—

"Si ba bini.—We are two." He would have to fight both of them before doing what he intended to do. Mazalen replied, with the age-old counter-challenge of *umgen*, and picked up both his sticks, one in each hand. He wrapped his *bayi* around the one in his left hand, and as this was the "guard hand," the stick was evenly spaced on both sides of the hand. The other two wrapped their left hands with their *bayis*.

It need hardly be stated that the natives do not know anything about boxing; to hit another person with the hand or fist is considered one of the lowest things a man or boy can do, for that is how the women settle their affairs. (Yes, sometimes they try to pull each other's hair out, but it being short, they don't resort to this very often) and a man never does anything that the *abafazi* does if he can possibly help it.

THERE are certain rules that have to be observed in stick fighting. For one thing it is cowardly to hit another person on the ankle bone and to hit him on the elbow. If this is done, he wins. Locking up sticks is permitted. One may hit the other on the knuckles if the fight becomes too hot. This makes him drop his guard stick. Should the guard stick break on the knuckles he hit, it is at the option of the opponent whether he shall let his antagonist pick up his stick. A rude chivalry sometimes is shown, it all depending on the temper of the antagonist at the time such an incident should happen.

Mazalen finished, squatted down and traced his fighting stick rapidly over the earth from side to side. His eyes were shining and his mouth had a delighted smile as his mind dwelt on the coming encounter. The other two leaped into the air and yelled—

"*Umgen!*" Mazalen replied—

"*Umgen!*"

There was a rush of feet and a clattering clash as the six sticks met and the boys "felt" each other out; a *vupi* as a stick hit Mazalen on the flank. He leaped back, the smile gone for the moment from his face.

Upina and Umtabata separated, one on the right. Mazalen made a swipe at Umtabata who was on his right hand side. There was an exciting few seconds as they feinted and guarded themselves. Mazalen got in a few good hits on Umtabata's calves and shoulders. Upina stole up behind and gave him a fine crack on the top of the head.

Mazalen half turned and, swinging his stick in a wide circle from side to side rapidly, he hit both his opponents in the stomach with loud slaps before they could bring their guard sticks to guard them. He sailed into Upina and there was the noise of *nquff—nquff—nquff* as he got in hits on Upina's head. Upina was overwhelmed and backed hurriedly, merely putting up both sticks blindly. Exultingly Mazalen whirled about and charged on Umtabata and got a smart blow on the jaw which made him furious. Rattle, rattle, clash ratclash went the sticks.

They backed away from each other murmuring, *"Ewe bawo—Ewe babo."* Upina yelled, *"Umgen, umgen!"* and set on Mazalen. Umtabata joined in, shouting, *"Indlu ma yi we.* The house must fall," as he fell on Mazalen with his sticks. In vain did Mazalen try all the tricks that he knew in order to keep those two sticks from raining on his head and body, but with no marked success. In great joy the two boys lambasted him. Mazalen stood it as long as he could and then yelled—

"Pezani! Stop!" But the two kept on beating him, shouting—

"Ewe kalaku uza ku yi yiteya I Nayama Wedwa ne?—Yes, you are going to eat the meat alone, are you not?"

"Oh, pezani togwana peza.—Oh, stop it, do stop," pleaded Mazalen. But his two companions had no mercy, but struck harder blows. Mumbling something, he dashed away from the rain of those sticks. The two boys threw their fighting sticks at him and chased him for quite a distance, throwing stones and hitting his head most accurately every time, even as they shouted:

"Iyah! Igwala Igwala naliya, awul—Ya! A coward—a coward. There he goes, *awul"* This last was in a high shout.

The dogs had become excited and were chasing poor naked Mazalen across the *veld*. The picture of him being pursued

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by the dogs and then fighting them off when they caught up with him, which the two boys could see in the distance, amused them immensely, and they fell down on the earth and fairly shrieked in their mirth. When they had subsided a little they looked at one another and Upina voiced both their thoughts by saying—

"*Si si qeleni la ma nkwenkwe ama kulu.*—We are in the class of the bigger boys."

For when two younger boys are able to beat an older and larger boy they immediately move up to the class that he belongs to. However, the beaten boy does not lose rank or class by it, only getting a lot of good-natured chaff and jeers from others of the tribe.

Having realized that they were persons of some importance, in their own eyes at least, they felt rather magnanimous and went to the rescue of Mazalen and beat the dogs away from him. He was plainly puzzled, until they informed him that having beaten him, they were in his class. He was inclined to sulk at that, but possibly his aching limbs reminded him that this would not be a good policy. Catching sight of the dogs he was able to change the subject to something less painful, for, snatching one of his companion's sticks, he set in pursuit of the dogs in order to vent his feelings and repay them a little of what they had given him.

Why later he did not suffer any ill effects, in the form of hydrophobia, from the bites that the dogs had given him, I do not pretend to understand or attempt to explain. It may be that it was just merely a lucky chance that he did not, or the whim of an incomprehensible Fate.

Upina went after all to get the firebrands, though he had to rake up the ashes and gather together the few live coals and blow them to a flame from which he lighted his brands and carried them to where the other two were. The reason of his refusing earlier to get the fire was because of the superstitious fear of the recently made grave which they had dug that morning. This, in fact, was the reason that all three had been so reluctant in going to fetch the brands.

The fire was made and the offal was fed to the dogs, not so much from custom as from the fact that there was so much meat and the boys could afford to do that. At another time, say in the *kraal*, they would have felt grateful to get *ama tumbo nezi mbindi, no dagade no qoqoqo*—the colon, the kidney, lights, trachea and gullet; but now there were rib roasts, steaks and venison. No boy in the world could resist this were he master of it all. So they had a feast.

Having filled up on the first buck, the second one was cut into long pieces and half-cooked, or *qina*, as the natives call it, and then set out in the sun to have all the moisture dried out of it absolutely. The two hides were rolled up and set in a crotch of a tree. The sun was about five hours high and the air was so still that it hurt the ears. The heat waves danced up and down as if some one were pulling them.

THE flies buzzed around the remnants of the feast the trio had just finished. The boys rubbed themselves with the fat from the meat of the buck, then put some sand on their different cuts. The sticks were taken out of the fire leaving only the live coals. By and by they bethought themselves about the cattle and got up lazily, jumped up and down so as to get the meal down and broke off small pieces of wood with which they picked their teeth.

Had water been available, they would have washed them, for it is a custom with the natives to always wash out their mouths and clean their teeth after eating anything, especially meat.

They started for the cattle without taking any note of landmarks or bearings. They, with unerring sense, went in the right direction where the cattle were grazing. As to the why of this, it can only be said that for centuries the natives have had to rely on this sense in order to find their way about until it became second nature. A better explanation might be given by a more learned authority; the above is given for all that it is worth.

Having reached the herd, the boys rounded it up and drove it slowly to the stagnant pool of water—*etafeni*. On the way there Upina exclaimed:

"*Kangela! Amafu, Amafu!*—Look! Clouds, clouds!" This meant rain. For be it known that about nine months of the year no cloud ever darkens the sky—day in, day out. The sun rises, pours down its merciless heat on the ever-drying and

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thirsting earth. Nowhere else is the sky so steely blue and seemingly so far. Therefore a cloud is somewhat of a novelty and a welcome sight after that length of time.

Mazalen remarked—

"*Ewe kodma a ku ko nkonjane.*—Yes, but there are no swallows." Swallows, instead of being a sign of Spring in Africa to the native, mean the very welcome rain, when a flock of them is seen it is an infallible sign that it will rain. The reason as to why these birds appear at the time they do may be explained in this way.

When the Winter sets in at the temperate zone these birds migrate to the tropics, where it is naturally more to their liking. They come in large flocks, making their residence on the same site from year to year on the face of some *iliwa*—cliff, or an old ant-hill—where they dig holes to make their nests.

The boys looked about the bushes on the watch for them.

The clouds raced across the sky, cast a shadow on the herd and the boys, shut the sun out for a few moments; more clouds came up but they had hardly reached the sun when it suddenly began to hail; stones as large as a boy's fist came down, making the cattle bellow with pain when hit by them and stunning the sheep, who looked ridiculous with their fat tails, for the African sheep differ from all others because of this peculiarity.

The tail is nothing but a large lump of fat covered with wool. Some sheep develop such a large tail that they get "heavy behind" and some kind of an arrangement is rigged up of a forked stick to trail behind and support the sheep. The natives are not so very fond of sheep meat or mutton because it is such a "dumb" animal and the flesh tastes just like the smell of it—musty—though the fat from the tail is prized highly.

The boys covered their heads with their hands and ran here and there seeking shelter, it being on the *taffa* (*veld*), none was to be found. Just as suddenly as it had begun the hailstorm stopped. The boys, naked, glistened as the water poured off their bodies; the stunned sheep came to life, the cattle lowed, the goats bleated, and the sun came out. Everything had a different aspect. The parched earth did not look so thirsty. At the sound of cheeping cries of, "*Si lap, si lap, si lap*—We are here, we are here, we are here"—seeming to come from the ground, the boys shouted in unison—

"*Inkonjane!*—The swallows!"—even as small-bodied, blue-winged and russet-breasted birds skimmed the earth, weeping, "*Si lap, si lap, si lap.*"

There was a distant sound of thunder; a whirlwind formed not far away and, growing larger and larger every moment, worked its way near the herd, caught one or two who, as they came out of that terrible vortex were flung with terrific force away from it. Stones, twigs and bushes of *Umvawe nyati* (tail-of-the-leopard) were caught and uprooted and whirled about fifty feet above the earth. As it seemed to be coming their way, the boys, who had been watching this wonderful phenomenon of nature with wonder and fear, ran in every direction for their lives.

The day became darker and darker swiftly. There was a long *sweesh* as of a thousand snakes running across the *veld* from a fire. As the wind came up, there was a crash overhead as if the whole heavens had burst open. As it thundered then the lightning followed. It seemed to pass so close to the ground that one could catch it. Another crash and a flash and the heavens really opened, for the rain came down in rivers, and in a few moments' time there were large streams flowing. It was dark as the darkest night.

Separated, each individual boy crouched where he was and shivered with terror, for was not this the day his elders had so often spoken of—the day when the end would come and they would see the "White Devil," for the evil one to the natives is not black or red, but white.

A tree was struck by lightning in the forest. The noise sounded as if some *si gembenga* were tearing off all the leaves from the trees. The cattle uttered sharp *mooes* in the darkness; and so it rained in this way until the sun went down and it lit up the landscape for a few moments. The boys called to one another and in their shivery nakedness started to make their way to a *ndawu e siti leyo*—a sheltered place, which one of them said he knew of.

They floundered, slipped and sometimes were swept away by different streams that they happened on as they sought their way. After struggling on blindly they

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happened on a rock, and, being tired, wet and badly frightened, they settled down. Naked and with teeth chattering, they tried to keep themselves warm by sitting close together. The rain poured on them even as they took cat naps.

This is the second of six pictures of native African life, by Santie Sabalala, each complete in itself. The next appears in the December 20th issue.

WHITE MAN'S MAGIC

by Frederick Moore

Author of "The Picture," "The Man Who Was Born Too Late," etc.

IF CAP'N CODDLES never knew about the fifteen hundred dollars I had saved up, we might have saved ourselves a lot of trouble. The worst of it was he knew he could make a borrow off me, me being mate of the *Laughing Jane*, and owning two-sixteenths of her. A mate has to humor his skipper, you know.

We had the schooner tied up in the Pasig at Manila at the time, waiting for contract cargo. The first sign I had that Coddles was putting his mind on something besides the schooner, was when he come aboard with a new pair of hen-skin shoes that squeaked like a hemp press.

"You aiming to bust into society?" I asks.

"Faggin," says he, "I want to look respectable in port."

"You'll need more'n shoes," says I. "You ought to begin at the topside of yourself."

He give a start, as if he had an idea. The old walrus had a glass eye on the port side that made him wink all the time to keep it in. He was so bald-headed that his forehead begins on the back of his neck, and on the starboard side he didn't have any teeth.

The next day he tells me he's ordered some false teeth—five of 'em, with gold trimmings and a rubber plate. And he borrows two hundred off me to pay for 'em.

The next thing I knows he wants a wig of hair for himself. That cost seventy-five more of my cash. I wished then I'd kept my smart remarks to myself, but the fat was in the fire. Coddles had me, because the new human fixtures was my idea.

"What's all this lavish stuff?" I asks. "Going to go in for a prize at a beauty show?"

"Well, it's an investment," says Coddles, picking his teeth and turning red around his nose. "It's a private matter."

"So's my money," says I. "If I lend it as an investment I want to come in on the profits."

That brought Coddles up all standing. He saw he had to let the cat out of the bag.

"It's a widder," says he. "Her name's Blair. I'm in love with her."

That put me on my beam ends, but I propped myself up on my elbows on the cabin table.

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"In love! How long you been in love?"

"I found out last week she owned a big coconut plantation on the coast down below Tangeru," says Coddles. "It has five thousand trees in bearing—and she owns a brig."

"And you fell in love with her last week," says I.

"About that time;" says Coddles.

"The point is," I goes on, "is she in love with you?"

"The teeth helped a lot. I tell you, Faggin, she has a dock, iron godowns, and machinery for working out the oil and drying the copra. And think of the brig. I'll need a skipper for it when I marry the widder."

I was thinking of the brig already. I had no idea of letting a wig of hair stand between Coddles and the widder—or me and that brig. I let him have the money.

The next night Coddles said he's popped the question. He come aboard with a head of hair like a Rooshan Finn.

"She'd marry me tomorrow," says Coddles, "only she's got to go up to Hong Kong to collect about fifteen hundred dollars. If I could raise that much we wouldn't have to delay the wedding."

"That's too bad," says I. "You've borrowed a lot to pay for suppers at the Oriental Hotel for Mrs. Blair, over and above the hair and the teeth. If you hadn't et so much I'd have 'most enough."

"Let me have what you've got," says Coddles. "I can raise the rest. You'll be skipper of the brig in no time."

"Where is it now?"

"Down below Tangeru somewhere. We better not ask too many questions about it, right now—won't sound polite. But I've told Mrs. Blair about you, and what a saving kind of a man you are, so she'll expect I'll want a friend of mine in my own ship. As a matter of fact she's said as much, so it'll come natural when I put you in command. You know, such things have to be done a little delicate. And you'll be best man at the wedding—so don't go too strong on the wine."

Coddles hurries away the next morning, all dressed up like a horse doctor. I could hear him squeak in them shoes till he got to the Bridge of Spain.

He was back about sundown, looking awful upset.

"I give her all the money," he says, "and when I went out looking for a parson she left the hotel in a *carromata*. From what I could find out it looks as if she sailed about noon for Hong Kong in the *Ta Ming*."

"You better cable the police of Hong Kong," says I.

"I don't want no scandal out of it," says Coddles. "The whole business would be in the newspapers, and it'd hurt my reputation."

We went down to Iloilo with cement. Coddles was kind of morbid for a few weeks. He threw the hen-skin shoes over the side somewhere off the Cebu coast in the night. He said they give him corns. I knew better. They reminded him of all my money he'd et at the Oriental Hotel with Mrs. Blair. Them shoes was the beginning of the whole business, and the reason for Coddles and me being broke flatter'n a skate-fish. He was getting to be a regular cynic—you know—one of these fellows who expects to git short-changed when his life-insurance money is paid after he's dead. He didn't consider my feelings at all.

We poled down around the Gulf of Davao with the schooner, carrying hemp mostly. It was then that Coddles heard about the plantation below Tangeru—heard there was really a big plantation there, and that it was owned by some people named Blair. Coddles begins to git hope again.

"We'll put in at that place," says Coddles to me while we was on our way to Tangeru, coming up the coast.

"What percentage will there be in looking at it?" I asks.

" 'Hope springs infernal in the savage breast,' " says Coddles.

"What do you hope for?" I goes on.

"Mind your own blasted business!" says Coddles.

He was that way a lot lately.

"I was hoping you'd find some way to pay me back what you borrowed," says I, going up the companion with most of the dishes off the cabin table circling round my head.

WE PUTS in at the plantation. A man in a white suit comes down to the dock, and we find his name is Blair.

"Got any relations out this way?" asks Coddles.

"No," says Blair.

"That's too bad," says Coddles. "I thought maybe you had a wife or an aunt or

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something up in Manila—seems I've heard of a Mrs. Blair."

"No relation of mine," says Blair, and Coddles swallowed his Adam's apple and let it go at that.

We filled away for Tangeru, being short-handed and looking to ship a couple of Malays or Filipinos.

"I've never had enough luck to fill a pipe," says Coddles as we sailed past the Blair plantation.

"Take good care of your health anyway," says I. "I've got almost as much of a share in you as I have in the schooner."

"Faggin," says he, "I sometimes think you're a Jonah," and he sighed like a black-fish that's come up for air.

"You was fairly lucky in spite of my near proximity before you went dude'n' round in yaller shoes with that widder—not that I want to be sarcastic nor nothing."

What I said riled Coddles a little. He hadn't been wearing his wig of hair—too hot and sticky. And his new teeth made his jaw ache. But now he begins to wear 'em again just out of spite—flaunting 'em at me, you might say.

We anchors one morning before daylight off Tangeru. The port looked deserted. No proas in the water, but all pulled up on the beach—and nobody fishing. There was a flag hanging over the sultan's *cotta*, or mud fort.

With the sun, we got a quartering breeze, and run in behind the reef. We anchored the *Laughing Jane* in a bay rimmed by green jungle, and full of flowers. We might have been in a blooming goldfish pond of a hotel garden.

A one-eyed old geezer paddled out to us on a board, and jabbered with our native crew. He brought the news that Belizardo was loose on the island with his *tulisanes* and raising hob looking for human heads. And the Sultan Mohammed Piang was out in the brush with his army to catch Belizardo and his gang.

That's why the place was lonesome. Piang wanted the five thousand dollars reward which the government had offered for Belizardo, dead or alive. Incidentally Piang also wanted to have it soft after he was dead, it standing a good deal to the credit of a Moslem if he killed a Christian—and Belizardo had that reputation.

Our boys give it out to the old native that we wanted a couple of hands in the crew, and after he'd talked all he wanted to he hit back for the beach. Not long after that a couple of natives came out in a *banca* and looked us over. I got 'em to come aboard and offered 'em fifteen dollars Mex a month to ship along with us. They took me up, and started work on crew rice and dried fish.

"We'll slip out of here right away," says Coddles to me.

"But I thought you wanted to see if the sultan had any copra to sell?" I puts in.

"We'll get out if we have to kedge out," says Coddles, and I could see he was all excited up about something.

Then he beckoned me into his cabin and shut the door.

"Faggin," says he, "one of them two men you just took aboard is Belizardo, the bandit leader, and the other's Serranio, his minister of war—and the two of 'em's worth seven thousand gold, dead or alive, delivered in Manila. I think they'll keep better alive, this weather. Git your anchor."

I drew my breath. It didn't seem to me that the little runt Coddles said was Belizardo could be the boss bandit of the islands who'd killed whole villages of people, and had kept our army in a guessing match, and Cook's-touring to catch him for ten years.

"How do you know?" I asks.

I was afraid Coddles was going to mess us up in something that would give us a lot of trouble. In them days in Tangeru it only cost fifty-two dollars and fifty cents to kill a man. If he happened to be a slave half that was enough. Them was the regular rates fixed by the sultan, but you could get a discount if you gave the sultan a fairly good pair of pants.

But the natives all wanted white men's heads for their head-houses. And any excuse to take a man's head was what the natives wanted—any little argument was good enough for 'em.

"I know by that scar on his jaw," said Coddles, "and the ring holes in his ears—one of 'em being torn.

"Five thousand dollars gold for Belizardo, and a reward likewise of two thousand dollars gold for Serriano. I read it all in the Flagship Bar in Manila."

What Coddles might see in the Flagship Bar didn't mean no special thing to me, but he was skipper and he owed me money.

"It's plain as mud," goes on Coddles. "That old monkey who come out on the

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board was one of Belizardo's men—and Belizardo doubled back to the beach while the sultan was hunting him in the hills. So Belizardo and Serriano took a chance of getting away with us when they heard we wanted a couple of hands. Now it's up to us to——"

Tangeru is southwest of Mindanao Island in the Sulu Archipelago.

CODDLES stopped. We heard a big hullabaloo among the crew then, and went on deck to see what was up. The water was full of proas, and the proas was full of natives, and the natives was full of deviltry. They were all wearing big krises, and coming from all directions for the *Laughing Jane*. The gongs were being pounded ashore so the jungle sounded as if it had a boiler factory in it, with a tin-pedlers' convention on the side. We saw we had trouble ahead.

"Neptune's mother-in-law!" says Coddles. "We're in for something, I don't know what. I've got it! The sultan knows we've got Belizardo, and wants him!"

"Maybe he'll split with us," I suggests.

"Git the hatch off and put them pair of rascals below," says Coddles.

And sure enough Belizardo and his minister of war were glad enough to drop into an empty hold and have the hatches put on. Of course, they never understood then that we knew who they were. They were just a couple of natives to us, as they thought, or else they figured it out that we didn't know how much they'd bring a pound in Manila on the hoof.

Coddles and me argued a little with the sultan, and let him come aboard. It was understood that only the heir to the throne, his prime minister, and two of his body-guards was to set foot over the side, and the sultan agreed to that—he'd agree to anything.

So we let the masquerade party into the cabin—the sultan in a pair of red pants, a blue sash like a homeward-bound pennant wound round his midships, and enough krises stuck in it to start a museum with. He wore a green turban and he'd been pretty good-looking if he'd never had the smallpox. One of his body-guard carried an umbrella over him, and a bad temper.

Our cook, Pedro, was a Filipino, but he'd been a Moro slave in his younger days and could talk the language, along with some of ours. We brought him into the cabin to sort out what the sultan had on his mind.

Old Piang made a few remarks after he'd took a look around.

"What's he say, Pedro?" asks Coddles.

"Him say, sar," says Pedro, "you is brother to him and him is brother to you, sar."

"He's a liar," says Coddles, "only don't tell him so now."

"He's just being polite," says I.

"I don't think it's polite at all," says Coddles. "I ain't got any relations that's sultans, and I can prove it. What's more, it sounds scandalous."

"We'll have to be a little diplomatic, seeing as these lads have us pretty well cornered," says I.

"All right, I'll lie as polite as I can, if that's what you mean," says Coddles. "Pedro, ask my—er—brother what's on his chest."

The sultan made another speech.

"Him say, sar," says Pedro, "you catch-um two men for crew boy, and him want to take two men shoreside."

"You tell him," says Coddles, "that them two men are cousins of mine, and I dropped in here to take 'em up to Manila for a vacation. If he's going to turn this thing into a family affair I might as well play the

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same game. I'm some liar myself."

"You sure said something," I remarks, and Coddles turns to me with a gleam in his eye and asks, "What particular part of what I said are you referring to?"

"The family side of it," I explains, just to have peace between us then, seeing we'd most likely have more fighting on our hands than we wished for.

The sultan seemed real surprized when Pedro told him what Coddles said. The old boy shut his eyes, and I thought maybe he'd fainted from shock. But he come to in a minute. It was awful hot in that cabin.

Then he speaks without turning his head. It sounded as if he was ordering ham and eggs and wanted 'em in a hurry. At the same time his fingers dropped down on the hilt of his kris.

One of the body-guard slips up through the companion and lets out a yell. In a minute the proas alongside closed in and a whole mess of warriors were aboard us. Then the sultan made another speech.

"Him say, sar," begins Pedro, his knees shaking and his eyes big as saucers, "him say this schooner now his. Him say you got Belizardo and Serranio downside in ship, and him going to sell 'em government. *Tambien*, him say fighting men want heads of you and Misser Faggin."

The warriors were jamming through the door, and they all had their krises ready for business.

"Faggin," says the skipper, "we can't resist."

"We can," says I. "but nobody'll ever know where they buried us."

"No," says Coddles. "Seven thousand dollars was a nice dream while it lasted, but we don't want our heads packed away into the hills and smoked in a basket over a slow fire. I wouldn't want to read that about myself in my home town in Maine."

"Exactly!" says I. "We could stand a lot of insults for seven thousand, but his Highness, The Moon Is Green Cheese, can get away with it. He can say we was hiding the bandits, and that will let him out for killing us—and he'll make a profit on our heads."

"His Highness, Big Monkey, wins," says Coddles. "Pedro, you tell——"

But the sultan didn't like our wasting time talking between ourselves. He makes a signal to one of the body-guards, and the brown fellow reaches over and grabs Coddles' hair, pulls his kris, and gits ready to begin collecting heads. The other body-guard sheers around the cabin table to begin on me.

But the body-guard who had grabbed Coddles' hair lets out a screech fit to bust the cabin skylight. I looks, and there he is, with Coddles' wig in his hand, and his eyes bulging out of his head.

The sultan begins to say his prayers at the sight. That wig left Coddles' head smooth and shining like a duck's egg—and the sultan and the others expected that when a man's hair come away something would be messy about it.

The body-guard didn't stop after that screech. He dropped the hair and went up the companion right over the prime minister, like a pole-vaulter. The heir to the throne goes into a kind of a spasm at the sight of Coddles' bald head, and makes the sign to ward off devils. The warriors in the door were all scared stiff, but they knew they had space to leave when they wanted to.

"You've got 'em!" I says to Coddles, and lifted my hands like one of these mesmerizing fellows in a dime museum.

"Hocus, pocus, gibbity gib all men are created free and equal take out your teeth take out your teeth!"

Coddles looks at me—and is on. He opens his mouth till it looked like the side-port in a Clyde collier, puts his hand inside as if he was going after something important, makes a face and gives his head a waggle and groans like a donkey-engine that has stripped its gears. Out comes the teeth, and he holds 'em up so as to show the red rubber plate that resembled the roof of his mouth and part of his palate. And he blows a geyser of tobacco juice up through the skylight!

"W-h-e-e-e-e-t-sh!" yells the sultan like the siren of a battle-ship, and throws a fit that would have made him rich in the movies.

The other body-guard forgot his job and dove right into the warriors at the door, going clean through like a torpedo. The prime minister and the heir to the throne hugged each other in the corner of the cabin and made noises like mice in a trap. By this time we had a fresh supply of warriors at the door—they'd heard something of what was going on, but they hadn't seen anything yet.

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"Mumbo, jumbo, give 'em the eye, give 'em the eye," says I waving my hands at Coddles, and leaning toward him with my face all puckered up as if it took hard work.

Coddles puts his finger up against his nose, jabbed the end of it into his cheek, gives a whoop like a wild man, pops his eye out into his hand, and holds it out to the sultan.

That was too much for his royal nobs. He takes aboard a supply of air, throws up his hands and covers his face. He begins to yell through his fingers for his prime minister, but old prime by that time was fighting the heir to the throne for first chance through the door to the deck. They both got there together on their noses.

Coddles pulls the sultan's hands down, and shows him the nice glass eye.

"E-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e!" screams the sultan, and makes a dive for the door.

He stepped on the prime minister as he went out—just step enough to give him a good spring. And Mr. Sultan makes a head dive over the side. I saw his bare feet last, and he shed two krises and a betel-box as he went. At the same time the whole lot of warriors did fancy flips into the water, and in the time Coddles and I could get to the bulwarks the whole circus of proas was heading for shore and throwing the ocean behind 'em with their paddles.

The sultan had got a good hold on the stern of one of the boats, and he was being dragged behind. The prime minister and the heir to the throne had a little swimming match on, and it looked as if the heir would win.

"The anchor!" yells Coddles to me. "We've got wind enough to clear the reef!"

I didn't argue none. We went out like the leader in a yacht race, and when we were clear of the island we headed away for Manila while Coddles and me shook hands all over the schooner.

"I was beginning to think, cap'en," says I, "that the only way I could get my money out of you was to raffle you off."

"I don't mind your being sarcastic like that now," says Coddles. "But I always had a hunch that we wouldn't lose money. If it wasn't for them teeth and the hair—and my eye—we'd have lost our heads. There's something in that old saying about 'Better to have loved and lost, when in the end you cop the coin.'"

"That's right," says I. "We've got seven thousand dollars' worth of bandits under hatches. Who was it that said I was a Jonah?"

"I didn't hear anything like that, you old grampus," says Coddles with a grin.

We collected the money in Manila, but we never went back to Tangeru.

SAILING-DIRECTIONS

by Gordon Malherbe Hillman

DRIVE her, drive her westward till she sweeps across the line,
Though her shrouds are taut and tattered and her decks are deep in brine,
Though the sky is scudding orange and the sea is frothing wine,
Bring her home!

Give her sail and drive her though the cargo roll and shift,
Though the seas come over the counter and the wind from the polar drift,
Though the wheel kick and the jibs snap as the rollers fall and lift,
Bring her home!

Swing her always westward though you cut her rig to lace,
Though the green sea rakes her as the steep swells race,
Though the salt freeze on the rigging, the fulmar on your face,
Bring her home!

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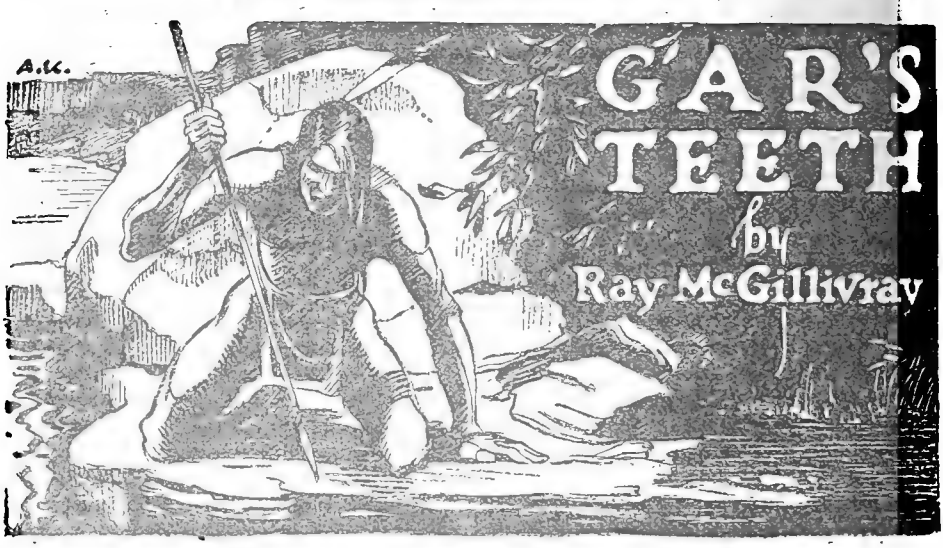

GAR'S TEETH

by Ray McGillivray

IN THE waning of the six hundred and ninth moon since the Great Killing, Eye-That-Looks-At-His-Nose failed to take his seat in the ring at the Sweating House. They found him groaning in his hut, consumed by a fever. Tree Lizard, the medicine-man, labored over him one forenoon, and then pronounced the old man incurable. Flying Tomahawk, the patient's son-in-law, and *minko* (chieftain) of the tribe, strangled him. That afternoon the bones were cleaned and placed upon the roof of the Sweating House to dry.

Thus died the last of the Chah'ta (Choctaw) braves who had fought under Black Warrior at Mauvila.

Many in the village, young and old, breathed easier. Some went so far as to spit upon the stones they added to the cairn commemorating the old ogre's death, until Flying Tomahawk, the *minko*, forbade it.

Branch-of-Holly wasted no time on this useless revenge. Waiting only until Flying Tomahawk, her husband, sat again in council, she sought out the group of youths playing *chunke* on the great alley in absence of their elders.

As no squaw was permitted to interfere with men-children in the midst of a game, she seated herself under the oak scrub at the side of the alley, feasting her eyes pridefully upon her son, known as yet only as the White One.

Three of the youths were playing, while a dozen more squatted along the sixty-yard alley, waiting their turn with a dignity worthy of warriors' sons approaching manhood.

The youngest and fattest of the three was stationed at the far end of the alley. He lifted the bowling stone—a wheel of granite eighteen inches in diameter and two inches in thickness—and with a short run sent it flying down the hard red-clay path.

No-Hair—a youth who had belied his infant's nickname by becoming the most hirsute of the crowd—and the White One, stationed opposite each other and twenty paces down the path, raised their unpointed spears.

No-Hair's weapon flew toward the swiftly rolling stone wheel. It was well-aimed and he grunted triumphantly, seeing a score for himself.

Simultaneously his expectation was blasted. The White One, taking his turn at the most difficult post, hurled his spear just a fifth of a second after No-Hair. The blunt end met the haft of the other spear in mid-air, turning it from its mark.

"*Chunke!*" shouted the White One gleefully. "My score is eleven. The game is finished."

The others grunted surly assent and took their places in the side-line, while three more youths stepped forward for a game. When they became braves a dozen sets could play at once, but because of chance for accident boys were allowed only one pair of spear-hurlers at a time.

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The White One, as victor, was not quite ready to relinquish the limelight.

"And it is just thus," he boasted, swelling his boyish chest and standing proudly erect, "that I shall spit the cowardly *Agusas* (Creeks) when my spear-heads are tipped with granite or shell!"

Then, as none of his companions paid him further attention, he obeyed the beckoning of Branch-of-Holly.

"Son of mine," she began, when the two had passed from the sight of the others, "seat yourself and listen."

She squatted, cross-legged, and after a moment of hesitation, the White One obeyed. In another two months he would disdain to listen to a woman, much less do as she directed, but legally he was yet an infant and subject to the will of Branch-of-Holly.

"I have waited long to tell you of something," she continued, speaking rapidly as if in fear of interruption. "While old Eye-That-Looks-At-His-Nose lived I did not dare. He would have had you killed if he had found out."

"Killed *me?*" broke in the White One, incredulously, "I come of the gens of chieftains! Tuscaloosa——"

"It is of that I wished to speak, son of mine," she interrupted. "All is not just as you have thought.

"Long, long ago—so many moons ago that only the chroniclers of the Sweating House know how many—your ancestor Tuscaloosa reigned over the Chah'ta tribes and all of the Alibamou, He was a great chieftain, who never was vanquished in battle.

"There came to this country, however, a strange tribe like none one may find now between the Tallapoosa and the place where all rivers become one and turn to salt.

"These newcomers were pale of face and body—paler even than you are, White One. On their heads they wore coverings made of a thin stone that glistened in the sunlight. On their breasts were plates and shields of this queer stone, which was so hard no arrow or spear could pass through it."

"Awff!" grunted the White One scornfully. "If *I* threw the spear——"

"It would not have passed through," finished his mother imperturbably. "That I could prove to you later. Some thin pieces of this shiny stone still are kept at the Sweating House. You have seen them. It is of little consequence, however.

"The great wonder about this tribe was the fact that besides the spears they bore, and the long knives of the white metal, they each had a stick which held thunder and lightning. When one of them pointed this stick a flash of lightning came from it, and the brave at which it was pointed fell over to the ground! Some died instantly, and some recovered, but all learned of the power of the fire-stick. Also they had bows more powerful than ours—bows fastened to sticks that fitted to their armpits—thus!

Branch-of-Holly demonstrated by lifting the White One's spear to her shoulder.

"The bowstring was tightened by a wheel, and the arrow released by pulling a little thorn on the shoulder-stick. The arrow flew much farther than even our strongest braves can send it!"

"One other great marvel was in the hands of this tribe. Most of them came riding on beasts larger than buck deer who carry four-point antlers. These beasts obeyed them, and carried them at great speed. On their backs the pale-faced tribe could travel farther in a day than one of our fleetest young warriors could run."

The White One tossed his head disdainfully, yet he began to grant his attention. Branch-of-Holly knew little; yet, being a woman, she was not given to lying or even stretching the truth.

"*I* could outrun one of them!" he remarked with grave confidence. His mother paid no attention, being used to boasting. A Chah'ta boy begins to assert his prowess just as soon as he can babble in imitation of the lazy bucks who lie about the village, smoking and falsifying concerning their achievements. He learns grandiloquence and hyperbole before his six-year molars are cut, and keeps on with the exaggerated recital till he is killed or is strangled on his sick-bed by the order of the medicine man.

"Out of the sunrise came these men who rode on beasts," continued the woman. "With them was a paleface who knew our tongue. (Ortiz, of Narvaez's expedition.) He told strange tales of a far country to Tuscaloosa, and offered rich presents. Tuscaloosa, in spite of what he had learned from a cowardly Cherokee captive concerning the treachery of the white men, treated the newcomers well, and guided them to Mauvila.

"There much trouble broke out. Instead of founding a village, and living in content,

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the white warriors constantly asked concerning a yellow metal of which we knew nothing. They seemed to value it highly, but Tuscaloosa could not direct them to any people who had an abundance of it.

"The white men grew discontented and angry. They killed one of Tuscaloosa's sons. Even this would have been forgiven, had not the White Chief seized Tuscaloosa himself and some other braves as hostages. These he said he would make carry packs for the company when they left. Imagine such an indignity!"

"*I* would have killed them!" said the White One.

"It was what they deserved. Tuscaloosa was too lenient at first." It was only when the White Chieftain seized the youngest squaw of Eye-That-Looks-At-His-Nose—Tuscaloosa's daughter—and took her to his own hut, that the tribe rose.

"Four days were spent in parleying, but then the palefaces started a battle. The White Chief went himself to kill Tuscaloosa, but our great leader escaped. A mighty battle ensued in which the white men were defeated, but at great cost. The firesticks had wiped out more braves than live in this whole village now. In return, however, the white men left the scalps and bones of many of their number as trophies when they fled westward."

"That was a great killing," observed the White One, "but why tell me the story? Many times I have heard it from the elders, though not as fully."

The woman looked about her fearfully.

"Because, son of mine," she responded in a low voice, "in your limbs courses not only the red blood of the chieftain Tuscaloosa, but also a pale taint of the White Chieftain, *Ullibaheli* (DeSoto)!"

The White One sprang to his feet.

"It is a lie!" he cried fiercely. "I am the grandson of Eye-That-Looks-At-His-Nose, and the great-grandson of the warrior of warriors, Tuscaloosa! Flying Tomahawk, our *minko*, is my father!"

"Your grandfather—my father—was *not* Eye-That-Looks-At-His-Nose, but the White Chieftain, Ullibaheli!" she answered, a gleam of pride creeping in to match the sadness of her smile. "It is a great disgrace among us not to rear many sons and daughters; therefore Eye-That-Looks-At-His-Nose became embittered by guarding his secret so jealously. He swore to my mother, his squaw, that all of us should die if a whisper of what he knew came to the ears of scoffers in the village.

"Because as a child my face was darker than now, no one suspected the truth. Flying Tomahawk, however, often marveled at the pallor of my skin, and lest his curiosity betray us I have stained my body with brown juices of tree-fruit. Also, till the palefaces were better forgotten, I kept you very dirty, O White One!

"For some reason which I know not, Yellow Eyes, my mother, looked upon this strain of white blood as a distinction rather than a blemish. She hoped that I would be a son. When that wish was disappointed she waited until I was old enough to understand. Then she told me just what I have told you, and made me promise that if I bore a man-child he should hear the same story before he passed through the month's ordeal of *baki*. You have seen the waning of your two hundredth moon. With the horns of the next new moon your time of coming to manhood arrives. I have finished."

"It is a lie," answered the White One gravely, but fierceness of denial had left his voice. For an hour after the squaw had returned to her sowing he remained motionless. Then he walked back with bent head and took his place in the last row of the watchers at the alley.

A few days later commenced the annual ordeal of *baki*, the process by which adolescent youths were tried in brawn and brain and in which they were presumed to reach manhood and fit themselves to take their places as warriors of the tribe.

At high noon on the muddy bank of the swift-flowing Coosa, thirty-eight boys lined up before the silent, watchful elders. In the midst of them the White One stood, proud and defiant, his skin shining out in sharp contrast to the red-clay pigmentation of his companions. He had spoken little since hearing Branch-of-Holly's revelation, but had sought out his rivals and comrades rather than shunning them. Thoroughly absorbed in their discussions of the *baki*, these had paid little attention to his silence.

Flying Tomahawk, bow in hand, gave a gruff order. The boys stripped themselves of their scant clothing and decorations, standing stark naked before the tribe. The *minko* then fitted an arrow to his bowstring, drew it back until the stone head rested

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against his scarred thumb, and released the missile.

High over the river, above the underbrush and oak crowding the further shore, flew the arrow. Beyond, where the dark green of long-needled pine towered above the reddish scrub, the arrow vanished.

Until this second each of the boys watched, craning his neck. The possession of this arrow meant that for a whole month the fortunate one who found it would be undisputed leader of the new warriors.

"Swim!" cried the *minko* sharply.

At this signal the youths darted forward; leaping the border of mud and plunging flat-bellied into the black river. A thrashing of water from the frantic efforts of the swimmers revealed the course of the mad race even when the individual participants could not be distinguished.

Two of the rolling whirlpools drew ahead of the rest. At midstream, while most of the contestants had been pulled from the direct line by the current, these two, close together, made rapid progress. The one behind slowly closed the gap until from the shore it appeared that two of the contenders splashed forward as one.

Together they rose to their feet in the sucking mud of the farther shore. A chorus of exclamations from the watching braves greeted them.

"No-Hair!" "The White One!" "Awff, run *swiftly!*" For among these Indians any contest was appreciated keenly. The White One seemed to step into a hole, for he stumbled, losing a yard of precious distance.

When No-Hair, leading the White One by a pace, disappeared in the scrub, the old braves shouted their ridicule at the remainder of the band, still floundering in the water. The thirty-six, however, scrambled up in pursuit, for they knew well that it often happened that the swiftest swimmer failed to find the coveted prize.

Through the tangle of underbrush the two leaders plunged. The White One, fleeter of foot, came abreast, forged ahead—No-Hair, gasping his hatred, clutched at the shoulder of his slimmer antagonist. He missed, his talon-like nails tearing a gash in the satiny skin. The White One, well aware of the chunky youth's intention had dodged just in time. He had no fear of No-Hair, but another time would do to settle the secondary rivalry.

True as the arrow itself he sped for the mark he had fixed in his mind. No-Hair was distanced. Back through the forest he could hear the crashing of the others as they endeavored to make up the handicap imposed by their poorer swimming.

A great pine, with trunk so huge a man's arm could but half encircle it, lay straight in the path. The White One slackened his headlong pace. Here surely the arrow must have flown——

Then he saw it. Thirty feet from the ground, just below the first branches of the pine, a feathered shaft stood out at an acute angle from the trunk. The stone head was not buried, but the White One realized at a glance that no human effort could shake such an immense trunk. Leaping upward, he clutched the rough bark with hands, knees, ankles and bare feet.

The climb was difficult, because of the fact he could not get a firm hold. He had managed to wriggle upward out of reach, however, when No-Hair, breathing heavily, arrived at the foot. Even the latter youth's frantic leaps were useless.

The rest, like a wolf pack on the scent, swept up to the goal. Several attempted to scramble up after the White One, who yet was five feet below the coveted arrow. The weight of numbers made this impossible. Some then drew back, and rushing, butted the trunk with head or chest. The White One knew of these efforts only by the slightest of tremors—far too little shock to dislodge either him or the prize.

With a shrill cry of triumph he reached far upward and snatched the arrow. This proved foolhardy. He had been too anxious. The treacherous bark gave way beneath his knees. He slipped, still yelling, and fell backward on top of his comrades, the arrow clutched in his hand.

The son of Tree Lizard screamed as the White One fell upon him. His left arm was crushed at the elbow, and his ribs were stove in on the same side. No one paid him any attention, however.

No-Hair was quick to attempt to profit by the disaster. He leaped upon the White One, grabbing at the precious arrow. He managed, indeed, to seize it with one hand before the rightful owner realized his danger. The White One then let out a whoop that scared even No-Hair, scrambled to his feet—unharmed by the fall—and wrested the arrow from his persistent adversary with a single twist. The stone head, flying

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in an arc, caught Nō-Hair's pendant upper lip, and split it to the nose.

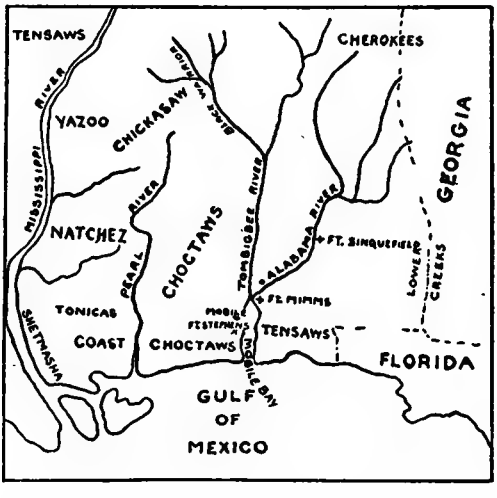
"I am *minko!*" cried the White One, exultantly. "Follow me!" And he turned, bearing the arrow aloft in his hand, and made off inland from the river. The others, acknowledging defeat, followed him.

ON A mound below which a clear cold spring bubbled from the ground, the White One drove Flying Tomahawk's arrow into the ground half of its length.

"Here is our village, braves of my tribe!" he announced; and then he gave them the directions voiced similarly by every such temporary chieftain who had come before him. They were to separate for four days and four nights, making weapons and foraging. Then they were to come in, spending a day and night at the "village" in games. This program was to be repeated five times. The last three days of the moon would be devoted to a foray under the White One's leadership.

They scattered.

The White One mounted the rising land west of the Coosa. Many times he had pondered the course he should pursue so as most quickly to clothe his nakedness, arm himself, and provide food, so he was not a moment in doubt.



Finding a tangle of tough vines he broke off several lengths, and formed loops. Searching then most carefully along for a rabbit run, he discovered a faint path leading between tangles of briar and poison sumac. Along this path he bent down supple hickory saplings, fastening the loops to them in such manner that the slightest touch would release them.

Then he sought a cedar log which had fallen in the sunlight, and detached from the side some bits of shrivelled fungus. Carrying these in his hand he climbed further till the sand and clay began to show outcroppings of stone underfoot. Searching among these stones the White One broke off numerous jagged pieces of granite and flint.

One of the latter sparked when hit a sharp blow, so he built his fire right there, blowing on the touchwood until its glowing punk ignited some dried pine needles and brown oak leaves.

His fire burning steadily, he heaped up a reserve supply of fuel, and then sat down patiently with his granite chunks. Using one piece as a chisel, he cracked off splinters from a larger fragment. Each splinter he saved carefully as he fashioned the single rock into a sharp point the size of a rattlesnake's head.

Darkness found him with a single spear-head completed. He hid his handiwork, and retraced his steps to the rabbit snares. Two were sprung and empty, the next was untouched, but the fourth sapling swayed jerkily with a noosed rabbit caught about the middle.

The White One grinned his elation, took down the game, killed and skinned it. Then he roasted the haunches on the coals of his fire, ate, slaked his thirst at the spring, and threw himself down to sleep dreamlessly through this, his first night as a warrior dependent upon his own resources.

Next morning he ate the rest of the rabbit, fashioned quickly a second, lighter spear-head from a splinter, and went in search of pine saplings for shafts. Later he would work these patiently from oak, but time was too great a factor now.

In the afternoon, equipped with his heavy spear, he started a doe—his first live target. The rude spear, hurled with all the force of his arm, sank into the soft flesh of the animal's side. After a chase of two miles he made the kill. The day was spent in skinning with his splinter-knife, and in hanging up strips of the choice venison in the sun to dry. This done he rubbed wood ashes into the skin and stretched it between

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two trees. A small strip he cut off, and worked thoroughly with rabbit fat. This would give him two bowstrings when the tanning was completed.

The third day he worked the stiffened doeskin and fashioned a bow for his strings. For arrows he split cypress, binding sharp rock splinters to the end with rabbit gut. Knocking down a stupid quail he procured feathers.

His armament complete, he sat down to a woman's task, the making of moccasins. As he had no better needle than a hickory twig hardened in the fire, it was a slow and painful process, drawing forth from him many grunts of disdain. With all his effort, even the finished moccasins were shapeless things he would have scorned at other times. The hide stiffened on his feet, owing to poor tanning, but they would have to do until he could get some made by Branch-of-Holly after the *baki* was over.

His most important duty still lay before the White One, however. On the morning of the fourth day he took his bow, arrows and light spear and traveled to the mouth of a large creek that emptied into the Coosa. Following up this stream he watched for a deep hole that would be likely to hold the great gar pike, his intended prey.

He had retraced his course to a point not far from the tree in which Flying Tomahawk's arrow had embedded itself, when he heard groans in the underbrush. Fitting an arrow to the bowstring, he advanced cautiously. A strange mumble as of words half-uttered came from before him on the ground; that instant he perceived a youth stretched at full length. It was the stricken son of Tree Lizard, the medicine man.

The lad was fevered and in a delirium of agony from his crushed ribs and broken arm. The White One gravely examined the wounds made by the protruding bones. Then he straightened out the sick boy, bound a limb of hickory to his injured arm as a rude splint, and fetched water in a split gourd.

His fishing forgotten, the White One squatted beside his patient, ministering as well as he knew. The best thing would have been to have taken him back to the village, but this was forbidden. During the month of *baki* any youth who attempted to return for any reason whatever was put to death with promptness by the braves.

The son of Tree Lizard came to consciousness fitfully. Each time when he saw the White One beside him he screamed, fearing that he was to be put to death. The White One did not attempt to reassure him, for it was his creed to prefer death to agony.

At sundown, however, when it was apparent to the White One that his patient would not recover shortly, a conflict of instinct and training took place in the breast of the young doctor.

Tree Lizard, himself, would strangle his son. That he knew. It is doubtful that the White One phrased a purpose in the decision he made at last. Instinct deeper than his heritage from *Ullibahcli*—for De Soto himself was not renowned for mercy—won the day. Lifting the now unconscious youth in his arms, the White One strode back to his own fire. There he gathered yaupon holly and brewed a gourd of the "black drink," which he forced upon the other.

It was a Chah'ta proverb that none of those doomed to die could stomach the acrid beverage, though all the Indians drank it with relish as war physic before a campaign.

The White One allowed Tree Lizard's son to sink backward after the draft. For ten minutes he watched, until a retching attacked the sick boy. The black drink had been rejected; Tree Lizard's son must die.

Even then the White One broke his traditions. Roasting a hind quarter of the doe he placed it with a gourd of water by the patient's side, and went his way into the dark of the forest.

THE change brought by the *baki* in the Chah'ta youths' manner of living was abrupt in the extreme. From carefree, pampered lives in the huts of their elders—in which unpleasantness as well as danger was eradicated by the careful squaws—they came naked into the raw forest to prove themselves.

No regular course of instruction in any branch had been given them. The squaws saw to it that they learned firemaking and the rudiments of cooking. From the recitals of the braves they had been expected to pick up tribal tradition, methods of hunt, and the code of warfare. The assimilation and application of these were left strictly to the youths themselves.

Each had welcomed the month of test

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with eagerness, feeling his untried knowledge and ability greater than the fiercest hazard he might encounter. The first four days west of the Coosa, though, brought saddened wisdom to a majority. Only a half-dozen made traps that functioned successfully. Several found that they possessed eleven thumbs apiece when it came to making spear-heads—ten thumbs on each pair of hands and one at the end of each neck. As a result, some had no weapons worthy of the name. Four had not eaten flesh. One had sickened himself by supplying this lack with fresh-water shell-fish of dubious edibility, and barely was able to drag himself to the rendezvous at the appointed time.

Three only had killed deer, and of these the White One alone had made himself moccasins. The others affected to scorn these protections as effeminate, yet all envied their leader secretly. The less successful ones feigned indifference to all achievement, yet just the same when they felt themselves unobserved they studied the manufactures of their rivals with an intensity of interest no instruction or theorizing could have fomented.

This first Sweating Fire, about which the youthful braves gathered in response to the White One's summons, possessed a grave significance in the lives of a few of the more successful. At a signal from the leader they heaped on excessive loads of fat pine boughs until the flames leaped upward thrice the height of a full-grown man.

Then the White One, as chieftain, leaped inside the nonchalant circle and began to recount his successes as a new warrior in a loud voice, the while jumping about the fire as near as his agonized nerve-ends would allow. It was one of the prescribed tests of bravery, so he dared the leaping tongues of flame until his scorched skin lost its pallor, and was suffused in the redness of burn. Perspiration sprang from his pores, but instead of dripping in rivulets it rose from his superheated body as steam.

His voice was triumphant, but withal his heart was heavy. In many ways he had outdone his temporary subjects, yet he had not earned the right to christen himself. He had not speared the gar! While he harangued the assembly and roasted his flesh, No-Hair watched with a malicious grin upon his torn, puffed countenance. The second the White One paused he leaped forward to take his place. It was customary for the *minko* to name the warriors in order, just as in the real Sweating House in the tribal village, but No-Hair was insubordinate. At the first raucous syllable of his recital, however, he stopped. The cold point of a spear had touched his back.

"Sit and await your turn!" commanded the White One.

A snarl of rage rose to No-Hair's lips, but he controlled it. Savage growls from the others showed that they were behind their chief. He struck down the spear, and strode angrily to his place in the periphery of the circle.

One by one the others rose in answer to their infant's designation, and repeated the White One's performance. Most had lamentably little of which to boast, but filled out their time with loud-sounding emptiness, at which no Indian was better skilled than the Chah'ta.

Three, however, added to their turns. When they had told of all their experiences, each flourished aloft a sinister, toothed weapon. It was the dried upper jaw of the voracious gar, king of southern fresh water. The flesh had been scraped away, leaving only the bony skull and the long, lean maxilla studded with bare barbs of teeth. With these teeth and their complements on the lower jaw, a gar could clip off a man's fingers as neatly as a shark. With them the Chah'ta youth was supposed to teach himself the supreme Indian virtue of cruelty—and he could bear no distinctive name until his legs showed permanent marks of the gar.

Bawling Papoose was first of the three. Doubtless because his childish cognomen had been a cross to him for fifteen years, he had passed up every other endeavor in favor of gar fishing. He brandished his awe-inspiring weapon with a shriek of juvenile exultation. Stooping then, he grated the sharp prongs across the calves of his legs until the blood ran, and then made a circuit of the fire, jumping about so all might see.

"I am Bawling Papoose no longer!" he yelled. "By all I shall be known as Scalping Warrior! Who denies it?"

No one smiled, or offered protest. Each was more wrapped up in his own affairs just then, and the new brave with the bloodthirsty handle was allowed to retain his choice.

Several nonentities—from the standpoint

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of achievement succeeded him, and then Greasy One rechristened himself Spear-Tot-Flies. He also was unchallenged, though if any one had hated him and had been able to vanquish him then and there, this name might have been thrown aside for Blunt Spear, or some such mocking cognomen.

At last, when every youth in the circle had voiced his claims to fame, the White One gravely called upon No-Hair. The latter had been scowling through the whole session, seething with ill-restrained wrath. Now he leaped to his feet, brandishing his jaw of gar, and omitted all preliminaries.

Scratching his legs as his two predecessors, he snarled out his defiance.

"I am mightier than any! I have done all that any one has done, and more! By a trick I am cheated out of being your leader, but I am the greatest warrior among you just the same! My name shall be Snake-That-Rattles, as my sting is death! Who denies it?" He turned to jeer at the White One. "Our *minko* is but the palest among us. He feared the gar, the biting of its great teeth——"

"It is a lie!" shouted the White One, stung. "And besides, I deny your right to your name!"

That was all the spoken debate, for the two lads, one broad and precociously muscled and the other slim and lithe, leaped at each other. The gar's jaw came down in a sweep meant to kill or disfigure the White One. He met the descending arm with a crashing blow just back of the elbow—a cunning cut well known in Indian warfare.

The gar jaw went spinning through the air, released from No-Hair's numbed fingers, but that did not end the fight. The two met with a smacking sound of bare bodies, strained an instant, and then fell sidewise suddenly, biting, clawing and punching like two bobcats over a partridge.

The White One half-stunned his antagonist by butting the crown of his head under No-Hair's chin. In the twinkling of an eye he pressed his advantage. One of the chunkier lad's ears dangled as the result of being ground against a stone. The White One leaped up, catching No-Hair by the ankles. Swinging him free from the ground as a hammer-thrower swings a hammer, he hurled the lad straight into the Sweating Fire!

No-Hair shrieked now with terror and anguish, and scrambled out the other side, rolling to extinguish the little tongues of flame that clung to him. His hair and eyebrows were gone, and over his body were charred welts that would rise into painful blisters.

The White One watched relentlessly.

"Your name is not Snake-That-Rattles!" he observed. "For all time you shall be known as Singed Muskrat!"

"It is true! It is true!" chorused the others, for they had no love for the vanquished, and it was just thus that the hated or less respected ones of the tribe often were named.

The White One then took up the gar's jaw dropped by his foe, and deliberately lacerated not only his calves, but the whole length of his legs front and back.

"It is thus," he remarked quietly to the circle of youths, "that your leader fears the teeth of the gar!"

WHILE the Chah'ta youths disported themselves at this first Sweating Fire, a weary cavalcade of horsemen was proceeding northward at a point only a few sleeps distant to the southwest. Thirty-one armored knights, led by an adventurer from the fields of conquest in South America, pushed their way through the forest, following the ridge above this black, nameless river in the wilderness.

They were grim and silent, these knights. Originally more than eighty had followed Don Orlasquez, but constant thinning of the ranks as much from fever and hardship as from pitched battles with the natives, had left only this handful.

Black-browed and grim were their faces. Eyes shone with the deviltry of disappointment linked with the morose glitter of fasting. They had come for gold and the precious stones of the Indies, and had found only death—and a country whose game eluded them. In their trail lay wasted villages of tribes who had tried to be friendly, but who had been able to provide none of the wealth sought by the Spaniards.

Natives of these villages had fared ill at the hands of the paleface strangers, and mounting ugliness of temper in the cavalcade promised still more cruel treatment for the next unsuspecting Indians to be met.

Yet neither the braves of the Chah'ta village nor their exiled youngsters dreamed of the intrusion. Where the youths in

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baki gathered the proceedings of sport and imitative tribal ceremony went on with the exuberance of spirit given to first freedom.

Among them no explanation of the absence of Tree Lizard's son was asked or given. In the afternoon, while the hungry boy warriors stole away to hunt provisions and the others engaged in a game of ball—using a fire-rounded pine fagot as a ball, and crotched sticks as bats—the White One left them and returned to his first fire.

The sick lad was not in sight, but it was easy to trace him by occasional blood spots on the crushed leaves. A hundred feet away the White One found him, not dead yet, but unconscious. His head was afire with a burn that extended to his shoulder only. From the hips downward he was cold and clammy to the touch. The White One got up twice to leave, yet something told him desertion would be an act next to criminal. He fetched water, but could not get it past the lad's throat. At last, vaguely reluctant, but seeing his duty plain, he put the son of Tree Lizard out of his misery, and consigned the body to the high crotch of a live oak. There the bones would be picked clean, and could be transported to the village later if the medicine man so desired. Then the White One returned in time to engage hotly in the ball game.

The second period of the *baki* saw even the least able of the Chah'ta youths fully equipped. They roved far and wide, taking care only that they did not recross the Coosa even at a distance from the tribal village. They hunted wild turkey and deer—some of the more venturesome even seeking the great wapiti, in imitation of their elders—killed the silent, fearsome moccasin in the bog, and searched for sign of the Agusas, Tsalagi (Cherokees) or Maskokalgi (Chickasaws).

The program of *baki* had been worked out scores and scores of moons before by wise old warriors, however, who knew that a two-day radius of travel from the rendezvous could not take their youngsters into hostile country, and also that no other tribes were likely to conduct marauding operations in the heart of the region controlled by the powerful Chah'tas. They could not guess that the interest of another world, far across the limitless distances of the Great Ocean, was focusing upon this fair new land in covetous earnest. Even the single palefaee expedition that had been defeated, and the vague rumors of strange visitors which floated in from members of the timid and mendacious tribes to the east, could not prepare the Chah'tas for a second invasion.

Therefore, when the White One, two sleeps travel down the Coosa, found, near where the stream joined the Tallapoosa, a wide track such as is made through the forest when wild beasts stampede before a great forest fire, he was puzzled. There had been no recent fire. That he knew. Beside, these prints in the mud were not made by animals of his acquaintance; instead of showing long and scuffy as spoor of the bear, or sharp-toed as the wapiti, these were almost round, blunt but deep, and imprinted as if weighty beasts had walked upon corn pestles! It was a herd of strange monsters, he decided, monsters such as his companions did not guess existed. The blood of a race of mighty hunters roared in his veins. Such a killing would make him a renowned brave. He followed the tracks as long as he dared, and then raced back, running all night, that he might be present at the Sweating Fire next morning.

Two things were strange about his actions in the circle. When he rose to detail his achievements he scarred himself again with the gar's teeth, but claimed no new name. Instead he promised his temporary subjects that he would wait until some deed of his should win him an appellation worth owning. Secondly, he told them nothing of his curious find at the river bank. If there were strange monsters to be slain, *he* meant to do the killing.

Instead of wasting time with games that afternoon, he sought the oak scrub, and there, after much searching, located a trunk that could be scraped down to size for his heavy spear. Snatching only a few hours of sleep he had the new weapon ready by dawn, and was pursuing his noiseless way to the southwest toward the spot once traversed by the strange animals.

He had his own bow and sheaf of arrows slung over his left shoulder, of course, but these were to be utilized chiefly for small game. The making of war arrows, poisoned at the tip, was an art practised only by Tree Lizard and his squaws, who kept the secret—well knowing that therein lay power greater than that even of a *minko*.

Once he reached the wide tracks, undimmed as yet by rain, the White One

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followed rapidly. He was more careful than ever not to make noise, for the new animal might be wary when stalked. He became so absorbed in his plans and speculations—and glorying in anticipation of the chance to recite this experience to his comrades—that he failed to note the fact that the tracks, once headed straight northwest had swung about, little by little, till now they had passed due north and were bearing a trifle to the east.

Of a sudden the White One stopped, sniffing. To his widened nostrils came faint yet unmistakable the odor of a fire. It was not the fulsome scent of fat pine blazing, but rather the acrid incense given off by half-burned logs that distil out resin with their smolder.

A half-mile farther on he reached the spot. There had been a fire—a camp-fire! The signs were unmistakable now, and his heart dropped. Other hunters were on the trail of the monsters!

About the fire the White One found scraps of food. He also discovered tracks fully as strange as those of the monsters he hunted. These tracks seemed to be made by the feet of warriors, for they were very plain about the fire, but what tribe had men whose toes pointed *outward?* The White One scanned the sign, and it seemed to him that each foot belonging to one of these strangers insubordinately attempted a different direction from its fellow! Though he examined scores of the tracks this peculiarity persisted.

Only another and more monumental discovery drew him away. Half-hidden in the grass and ground palms he stumbled against an outlandish contrivance which seemed, when he raised it, to be a small bow attached in peculiar fashion to a stock of wood the length of a man's arm. The string was broken, but the White One speedily repaired that with the extra thong he carried. Eight long, slim arrows, feathered scarlet and pointed with a queer stone that showed reddish brown in color but which was far harder than granite, were strapped under the shaft of the cross-bow. When he tried to chip it the stone did not yield, but *rang* in a strange way under the impact. The White One was seeing bronze for the first time.

The bowstring passed through a little shiny loop that attached to a wheel at the side. Out of curiosity, the White One turned the wheel with the projecting handle. The bowstring tightened! In the course of his curious fingering he touched the trigger by accident, causing the weapon nearly to leap from his hands by the force of the release. Ensued a few moments in which he seriously meditated throwing away the strange machine. Still, it seemed to be nothing more than a different sort of bow and arrow.

Of a sudden there flashed to his mind the words of Branch-of-Holly. She had told him of the powerful bow attached to a stick, belonging to the paleface invaders—a bow that shot after being wound up, and which was held at the shoulder by the strangely carved stock.

Undoubtedly this was one of those bows! Untroubled by the fact that more than forty years had elapsed since the battle of Mauvila, the White One decided that the cross-bow must be one of the weapons lost by the men of *Ullibaheli.* That another party of the strange invaders might be ahead never entered his calculations.

Really curious now, he fitted one of the slim arrows to the string, wound up the little wheel, fitted the stock to his shoulder, and touched the trigger. He had aimed at a sapling fifty paces distant, obeying the instinct of firing at some mark, even when handling a new weapon.

The cross-bow shot forth the arrow. Instead of hitting the mark at which he had aimed, however, it flew to the left toward a larger tree fifty paces further distant. It reached the mark with a *spat!* of metal entering wood, and stood out, quivering. The White One, hurrying forward, found that the shaft was buried to a third of its length in the pine trunk! When he tried to withdraw the arrow it resisted until finally he broke it. Even the bow of Flying Tomahawk himself could not have driven an arrow that deep! In spite of himself the White One formed a great respect for the weapon he had thought a toy.

Thoughtfully he took another arrow, but this time he was careful to wind up the wheel only to half-tension. Raising the bow he aimed and fired. This time he came closer to the mark, the arrow impinging upon a rotted log near the base of the sapling.

Again and again he repeated the process, finally substituting his own arrows for the priceless shafts he had found. The lighter

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arrows served well, though they were by no means strong enough. They splintered under the force of impact..

At the end of two hours, however, the White One could use the new weapon with all the accuracy he exhibited with his own bow—and he found himself aiming at targets he never would have supposed to be within bowshot.

AN HOUR after daybreak the White One came upon a tethered pack horse belonging to the expeditionary party of Don Vicente Orlasquez. The boy did not know it was a horse, naturally, nor that it looked upon men, red or white, with the attitude of resigned acceptance normal in a well-fed beast of burden.

He saw only a dirty-white monster as high at the shoulder as his own chin, cropping verdure and snuffing in its breath. He imagined it a straggler of the great herd which had escaped somehow the arrows of the hunters ahead of him. Waiting only till the bulging, grass-fed side of the horse presented itself through the scrub, he aimed.

He had thought of using his spear, but a single glance showed him that this animal was greater prey even than the black bear. His puny arrows, likewise, were discarded. Trembling in every limb with an ague of excitement, he fitted one of the scarlet-feathered arrows to the crossbow, wound the wheel to its greatest tension, leveled the stock to his shoulder, and pressed the trigger.

With a twang of the released thong the arrow sped as a scarlet streak to its unmissable mark. Sinking into the soft flesh as a dagger buries itself in wet plaster, it brought forth a spurting geyser of darker red just behind the animal's left shoulder.

The horse, fatally stung, plunged upward, squealed in terror and mortal pain, and fell, kicking.

Seizing his spear with a yell of triumph, the White One was about to race forward for the kill, but in the very act he stopped, frozen in his tracks. The petulant challenge of a sleepy sentry had come to his ears!

This was one of the other hunters, no doubt. That they were hostile warriors the White One did not question for an instant. Therefore he dropped to his hands and knees, and crawled rapidly to the side. Before his astounded eyes rose up a man, whiter than himself on both face and arm, and with a plate of some substance over his chest which glinted brightly in the morning sun! The newcomer carried a weapon somewhat similar to the crossbow, but having the end of its stock finished in a funnel instead of holding a bow.

The sentry cried out again in his strange tongue, and then, glimpsing the dying horse, he yelled the general alarm. Catching a sight of slight movement in the bushes, he raised the arquebus hurriedly and fired. The report was staggering.

Through the branches above his head the White One heard a bullet pass. Frightened out of his curiosity for the moment, he turned and scurried away. These were the white fiends of whom Branch-of-Holly had spoken! The thunder and lightning of the firestick had been turned on him! As he ran he glanced backward often, but the sentry, fearing an attack in force, contented himself with summoning his comrades.

As he ran the White One half expected the thunder and lightning to catch up and kill him, but when this catastrophe failed to occur he began to feel less terrified. After all, he, the White One, had slain one of the great cloud-colored beasts! The pale-face warrior had pointed a firestick at him, and still he lived! Branch-of-Holly evidently had not lied, but she overrated these interlopers. He stopped, flung himself on the ground, and thought it out.

An hour later, employing all of his stealth and newly acquired woodcraft, the White One reapproached the stranger's camp. He carried with him only the crossbow and the six arrows, for he realized the impotence of his other weapons.

In the camp itself there was buzzing and commotion. The Don, returning with thirty-six new natives for pack-bearers to replace horses he had lost, heard of the killing. This was a serious blow, as horses were getting few, and they were hundreds of miles in the wilderness. He berated the sentry, his companions—everybody. Then, when one of the shackled natives refused to submit to the indignity of bearing burdens, the touchy Don whirled upon him. His sword flew from the scabbard, impaling the helpless native, who fell with a dying shriek.

Mounting to his perch in a live oak just after this tragedy occurred, the White One beheld the activities of the camp with wonder and horror. He saw that instead of

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pursuing the great whitish beasts, the pale-faces actually held them in thrall and made them perform various services! Then he descried one of the Spanish warriors mounted, and he knew that these beasts were horses, the great monsters of which Branch-of-Holly had told him.

Almost he had fled when he recognized Flying Tomahawk and the others as companions of the strangers. As a youth in the midst of *baki* he had no right to consort with his elders even to the extent of spying upon them.

Something in the sullen aspect of the Indians held him, however. It was not like Chah'ta braves to walk with lowered faces, nor did any brave trust himself in the hands of an enemy—all strangers were enemies—without weapons. He saw that not even Flying Tomahawk carried a bow or spear! Also he saw that something shiny encircled each ankle of his elders—and a *clank-clank* sounded at every short step.

Followed two incidents that made the White One forget his impulse to flee. Not content with the haste displayed by Tree Lizard in packing, one of the cavaliers struck him fiercely across the face with a short whip. Tree Lizard cringed. Then another of the Indians was jabbed with the point of a naked sword for muttering his rebellion. Flying Tomahawk appeared to protest. Don Orlasquez's answer was short and to the point. The Spanish commander whirled, arquebus in hand, and shot down the Chah'ta chieftain!

The instant that Flying Tomahawk died the White One made a momentous decision. Lifting the crossbow he sighted an arrow point-blank at the shining plate on the breast of Don Orlasquez. The boy's fingers and arms did not tremble now. A white heat of fury burned in his veins. With the desire for revenge singing inside his brain, he released the arrow.

Perfectly aimed, it sped to the mark. This time, however, it failed. The shining plate deflected it, and to his horror and surprize, the White One saw it wound the foot of an Indian standing twenty paces distant!

Then the words of Branch-of-Holly repeated themselves in the boy's mind. No spear or arrow would penetrate this strange covering! Very well, he would try another mark!

As the startled Don leaped back, endeavoring to pierce the foliage with his gaze to see from which point this attack had come, a second arrow, better directed, hit him full in the cheek and whipped through into his evil brain. With a clatter of metal he sank to the ground, his empty arquebus falling on top of him.

For the space of a heartbeat the White One gazed open-mouthed at his handiwork. Then his second shrill cry of triumph sounded, and he swung down, dropping the last ten feet to the ground. The Spanish warriors heard the Chah'ta war-cry, "*Hai-yow-w! Hai! Hai!*" first near, and then growing fainter in the distance, but they did not pursue. This was bad country, they decided, particularly as a glint-like fire had crept into the eyes of each of their shackled pack-bearers. They hastened preparations for retreat.

The White One, caching his weapons for the sake of speed, fled like a dried leaf on the hurricane. When he reached the site of the boy's "village" he loosed the rallying cry, the Chah'ta call that so often through the centuries to come was to strike fear into white pioneers.

From a long way came an answering hail, then another. Stumbling Boy was the first to appear, and then Singed Muskrat. Even the latter's hatred of the White One could not conquer the necessity of obeying the cry of the war-path. The mingling voices of the three, as they faced from each other for the sake of piercing distance, brought numerous faint replies. One by one the youths straggled in. When the last had joined the circle the White One cried out his story. The recital was rendered incoherent by his frequent interpolations of triumph at the double killing he had made, but the youths understood enough. Often they had heard of the white enemy overthrown by Tuscaloosa. Here was an opportunity for *them!*

As they swung in behind their leader, none thought of the *baki*. Each was mumbling to himself— "Through the face the white braves can be killed!"

IN THE bead-string records of the Chah'tas one may read the story of that battle even to this day. As the first complete victory over the white marauders—the Black Warrior's rout of De Soto had been a dubious and costly triumph—it was played up extensively by the Indians, and though one may search in vain through

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Spanish chronicles for more than a vague reference to Orlasquez—grand-nephew of Pizarro—any Chah'ta will tell the tale readily.

At the camp two more of the Indians were slaughtered before the unwieldy expedition started on its return journey. No gold had been found. All along the Spanish hunters had been unlucky, and had brought down insufficient game. A pair of horses laden with the choicest wines of Castile had stampeded, smashing the slim-necked bottles. The Spaniards, irritable in temper at best, were goaded to a state of chronic eruption, and took it out on the natives.

Six hours of travel, with an hour set aside for the mid-day meal, had been completed when they rode into the ambush. The first sign came when the leading horseman toppled from his mount.

Immediately three others drew alongside, questioning roughly. The Indians, well aware of the lurking figures all about them, dropped to the ground but could not flee as they were hobbled by ankle irons that held them to a mincing shuffle. The best gait of which they were capable barely kept them in place in the slow-moving expedition.

The Spaniards, already terrified by the death of Don Orlasquez, shouted aloud at the discovery of another of their arrows in the forehead of their trail-breaker.

"It must be a traitor!" cried one. "This arrow came from a Spanish crossbow! It was made in——"

He got no further. A red-feathered arrow buried itself in his open mouth, the point protruding through his neck.

"*Hai-yow-w! Hai! Hai!*" came the yell from thirty-seven boyish throats, and a volley of arrows struck the horsemen. A horse was hit, and plunged wildly, bringing great disorder on the narrow trail.

Only a few of the youths' missiles inflicted mortal wounds, but nearly all—fired at close range—found unprotected flesh. They kept coming, too. The White One released all his Spanish arrows, wounding or killing with each shot but one. Then he fired his own, more rapidly, picking off, each time, an enemy who was about to fire his dreaded arquebus.

The Spaniards, whom no one could accuse of lacking bravery, spurred their mounts in an attempt to break through. Two of the foremost horses went down, however, blocking the road. Leaderless, and entirely unprepared for such a determined attack, they were forced to dismount and fight almost singly.

The guns roared, taking their toll, yet for the most part the Spaniards fired at a foe they could not see.

When the young warriors, led by the White One, had exhausted their stocks of arrows, they charged the foe with spears, yelling their hatred and triumph. The Spaniards met them with sword and crossbow, felling six in the mêlée following that first rush.

Right there the fight might have ended, except for one factor. Preoccupied by the ambush, the Spaniards had paid no attention to their captive pack-bearers. The latter, recognizing their rescuers, joined the fight with whoops of delight. Unarmed and impeded as they were by the shackles, they leaped upon the heavily armored knights, snatching away weapons to use upon their recent masters, or throttling the palefaces with bare fingers.

In fifteen minutes all of the thirty who had marched with Orlasquez were dead except a knot of three, who, back to back, had warded off all attacks. Twenty braves, released from other conquests, rushed this valiant coterie, and though hacked woefully by Spanish steel, bore them down by sheer weight of numbers. Two died, and the last, overwhelmed by a half-dozen yelling Chah-'tas, was tied hand and foot for later attention at the village. In the scalp-gathering the White One claimed—and secured—six trophies.

Including the youths, thirty-nine battle-scarred Chah'tas gathered for the return journey. The White One, leading his diminished cohort, approached Tree Lizard. The latter, groaning as he limped forward on the arm of an unwounded brave, touched his chin in the sign of respect.

"It was a great killing," he observed. "Our lives are at your command, O seed of Tuscaloosa!"

"The *baki?*" questioned the White One briefly.

Tree Lizard tossed his head and grimaced—perhaps with pain.

"That was for children, not for warriors," he said with emphasis. "It is finished."

The White One turned abruptly, but the fierce gleam of joy in his eyes could not be repressed. With chest extended almost to the point of bursting, he led the way back

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to the moored canoes, and no warrior of the band even muttered a protest.

Back at the village an uproar greeted their return. Mingled wailing and shouts of triumph rose in fearful din. Also there was much scurrying, explaining and preparation, for not all the braves of the village had been lured across the stream by Orlasquez—and the remainder did not take kindly at first to the idea of releasing the youthful warriors from *baki*. Tree Lizard acting as chieftain *pro tem*, though, persuaded them to wait for the Sweating Fire, even then being kindled.

Tree Lizard, himself, conducted this function, which lasted from the late evening hour of return till long after the pale streamers of dawn had crept from the eastern horizon to the zenith. Packed into the great hut, surrounding a fire that was replenished regularly, the braves of the Chah'ta village sweated, half-suffocated and blistered themselves through the wildest session in the annals of the tribe.

First came all the preliminary tales of the older warriors. Each one dwelt upon his deeds of bravery rather than upon the manner in which he had been rescued, yet by the time the last had seated himself in the circle all knew that a great stratagem had been formulated and carried through by the new warriors.

Tree Lizard called upon the White One. A transcript of the lurid yarn poured out by this youth would bear only faint resemblance to the facts—it was not expected, though, that he would fail to exaggerate. At the end of his tale, however, a murmuring chorus of approbation rose from the seated warriors. The White One held up his hand. He had one thing more to say.

"Braves of the Chah'ta nation," he announced. "The time has come for me to choose a name! Gaze upon my legs; they are well-scarred!" He circled the fire so all might see.

"It is not because I feared the gar that I have not taken a name, but because I wished a transformation to occur within me. See how I have drawn the gar's teeth through my flesh, even above the knees? The transformation has occurred! When I went forth to the *baki* there flowed in my veins the noble blood of Tuscaloosa, the Black Warrior. Beside this also, according to the tale of Branch-of-Holly, there was a taint of blood from that hated paleface *minko*, Ullibaheli!"

At this announcement of a fact entirely unsuspected, some of the braves voiced derision. Others sprang to their feet, ready to annihilate this man who professed his relationship to a great enemy. As the White One stood stock still, however, curiosity quelled the rising tumult.

"For that reason," continued the White One, "I used the gar's teeth more than any of my warriors. From the wounds on my legs every drop of the tainted blood has flowed away. See?" Snatching up a great jaw of gar he had placed at his feet, the White One drew the keen barbs swiftly across his chest in three strokes, making the crude representation of an arrowhead. From the fresh wounds blood welled scarlet as wine.

The Sweating House fell silent. Here was a brave indeed!

"The blood in me, that you see before you," continued the White One solemnly, "is red, red, red! *All* red! I am a *Chah'tal* I shall be known among you always as the Brave-Whose-Blood-Runs-Red! Who denies it?"

Not an Indian stirred until after the youth had taken his seat. Then Tree Lizard arose, staggering a little from his weakness.

"It is the truth!" he said. "In this youth runs the red blood of a chief!" And he gravely motioned Brave-Whose-Blood-Runs-Red to the place in the circle he had vacated.

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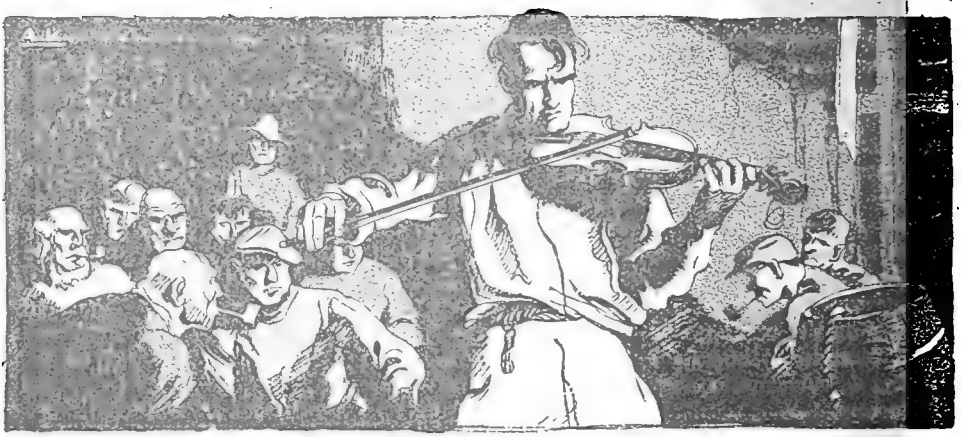

The GHOST OF DAGO FIDDLER

A Complete Novelette by Norman Springer

Author of "Donkeyman and Princess," "A Tropic Idyll," etc.

ONE time, when I was a young fellow, (said old Barnaby, the sailmaker) I shipped before the mast in a Yankee bark named the *Meteor*, of Boston. She was a hot one, a regular sizzler, my solemn oath she was! Her mates were hard cases and her Old Man was a holy terror. They ran the *Meteor* on the knock-down-and-drag-out plan. I was feeling sorry for myself before we were five minutes away from the dock. That's the sort of ship the *Meteor* was.

We were bound from London around the Horn to San Francisco, with what they call a general cargo. In those days a general cargo out of the Port o' London for the West Coast meant a lot more than it does today. Why, the *Meteor's* hold was filled with barrels and barrels of prime whiskies and brandies, and fine wines in hogshead and case, and kippered herrings and fancy relishes and rich preserves no end. A lad's mouth would run water just thinking of the things to eat and drink below hatches. Aye, and we thought of the cargo qiute often, too, for this was before the days of the Seaman's Act, and the *Meteor* was a hungry hooker.

On the second morning out, when we were clear of the Channel, we discovered something on board that couldn't be listed with either cargo or crew, something that wasn't on the manifests or articles, or in the knowledge of fore or aft. The cook—who was a Savanah darky named Snowball—went down into the forepeak to get a sack of coal for the galley. He didn't stay down there very long. He came up quick and sudden. His woolly kinks were standing up on his head, and he had lost so much color he almost looked like the name they called him. He says there was a dead man down in the forepeak.

"A dead man, is it!" says the mate, who had the deck. "Now what does any man mean by dying in my forepeak? Down there, a couple of hands, and heave the swab up and out of it!"

So we heaved him up and out of it, and he wasn't a stiff at all, but a live stowaway. Still, he looked almost dead, what with sea sickness and fright. I never saw a sicker-looking lad in all my days.

A lad was all he was, a mere boy, without the sign of hair on his face. I should have judged his age as eighteen or twenty, but maybe he was older. By the cut of his jib he was some kind of foreigner; and it was plain he had been playing in hard luck ashore, for the clothes that covered him were rags. A hollow-cheeked, hollow-chested boy, he was, with a mortal fear of the sea and of men in him. And all he carried with him, by way of sea-gear for a Cape Horn passage, was an old leather fiddle-case which he hugged like it was a pretty lass he had hold of.

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He looked at the mate, and his knees knocked together. The mate looked at him, and licked his lips with his tongue, like a cat. The rest of us felt sorry for that poor stowaway, for the mate was Mr. Blackjack Fitzgibbon, and he had a reputation for doing things to 'foremast hands.

He began to do things to the boy right away.

"So you've booked yourself for a free passage, have you?" says he in a soft, silky voice, the kind of voice a cat might use just before jumping, providing cats were given to talking. "So, my fancy gutter-swab, you've wished yourself upon us, have you?" says he.

Now, that manner of speaking didn't fool any of us hands who were within ear-shot. We had heard the mate's soft words before. But the boy was taken in by the mild sound. He smiled, a little, hesitating, pitiful sort of smile, and he says:

"America! America!"

"I'll show you America," says Mr. Fitzgibbon in his purring way.

He fetched the boy a clout on the jaw which sent him sprawling.

"Now how do you like America?" says he.

Then he hazed the boy aft with boot and fist.

"For the captain will want a look at you, m'lad," he says.

So Captain Creed had his look at the stowaway. Just what happened in the cabin we couldn't see for'ard, but knowing the old man, we could guess. He finished what the mate had begun; it was the sort of job Creed liked. Pretty soon the lad was booted out of the cabin, still hugging his fiddle-case, and the third mate chased him for'ard and says he was to eat breakfast and turn to with the watch.

That's how Dago Fiddler came among us. He sat down to his first dish of lobscouse in the *Meteor's* fo'c'sle with blood on his face and terror in his heart—like many another lad before him.

We sized him up, and some of us spoke kindly to him. He blessed us with his eyes, but except to say "America, America," he could not talk in any lingo we understood. Not even Dago the Greek, who hailed from Smyrna and could palaver most lingos, could find out what countryman the lad was, or anything about him. He wasn't as white as you or me, and not as black as snowball, so it was plain he was some sort of dago. We named him Dago Fiddler, because of his fiddle, and to distinguish him from Dago Portagee and Dago the Greek.

YOU may have guessed that the life of a 'foremast hand in the bark *Meteor* wasn't the pleasantest life a man might imagine. My flaming oath it wasn't! It was "Fly, you beggars, fly!" from dawn to dawn, with belaying-pin soup and knuckle-duster hash three times a day, and between meals, too. The *Meteor* was a hot ship for a good man, and a hell ship for a lubber.

Little Dago Fiddler was a lubber, the completest lubber I ever clapped eyes upon. He didn't know the language of the ship, nor her stem from stern, truck from keelson, and he didn't seem able to learn. My eye, he caught it from the mates! Most of us for'ard were young and spry and good sailormen, and usually we could keep from being manhandled by hustling about our work. But poor Dago Fiddler could only blunder and suffer.

He was put to work as a day-man under the third mate, and from sunup to sundown he slaved at mean and dirty jobs about the decks. His being on deck all day gave both Mr. Fitzgibbon and Mr. Buck, the second mate, a crack at him; and what they didn't think of to make him miserable, Mr. Letcher, the third mate, did. He was dirt under foot, and the passing heel ground into him.

To the cabin crowd Dago Fiddler was just a stowaway, who was to be worked half to death and have the fear o' God and his betters thumped into him whether he needed it or not, because he was an easy mark, and an example to the rest of us. I suppose they figured that by hazing him they could put the fear into the tough bullies for'ard. If he broke under the treatment—well, he was just a dirty dago stiff, who didn't matter anyway.

To the third mate in particular Dago Fiddler was a godsend. Being able to knock about a meek lad who couldn't fight back was more than meat and drink to Mr. Letcher. He was a four-flusher as a bucko mate, a mean-faced, mean-spirited, sneaky man with a waspish tongue and nagging ways. It was said for'ard he got and held his job because he was related to the Old Man's wife. Anyway, he didn't stand on his own feet and hold down his job with his

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own fists, like the other mates. He nagged and spied and found fault and reported—and then stood by and gloated while the other mates did the dressing down. My oath, how we hated him!

Dago Fiddler was the smallest man on board, and the one man for'ard the third mate felt safe in kicking or hitting without having the other mates on hand to back him up. After a few days at Mr. Letcher's beck and call, poor little Dago Fiddler got the same look in his face you'll notice sometimes in the face of an alley pup—a sort of suffering amazement at the amount of unkindness in the world.

If his days on deck were plain —— for a while his nights weren't much better. The *Meteor's* fo'c'sle crowd was like most crowds the world over, eager to kick the man who was down. Dago Fiddler got the mean jobs below, as well as on deck.

He was roused out in the gravy-eye watch to scrub the fo'c'sle floor. He must "peggy" the mess-kids to and from the galley. He must do whatever any able seaman told him. It was Dago Fiddler do this, do that, come here, go there, every waking hour the poor lad had. Since he couldn't use his tongue, there was always a heavy hand against his head, or a heavy boot against his breeches, to make him understand.

Oh, at first the lad had a bad, bad time of it! Then he began to talk to us with his fiddle. My eye, how he could make that piece of wood sing! It was a language we could partly understand; it was talk that would have melted the heart of a wooden Indian; it soon brought the fo'c'sle around to treating him half decently.

Every evening, in the second dog-watch, he would play. At first some of the crowd would want to have sport with the lad, because it was quite safe to play tricks on him. But most of us would not allow him to spend his dog-watch in any other way than music making. As soon as supper was finished some bully would sing out—

"Hey, you Dago, you fiddling so-and-so, grease up your arm now and give us a jig!"

Then Dago Fiddler's face would light up, quite likely for the first time that day. He loved to play better than most men loved to eat. He would open the old leather case and take out the fiddle, and do it with the air a man might wear while praying.

My word, he loved his fiddle! It was a greasy, wormy old thing that looked like it might fetch a dollar, no more, in some Johnny-All-Sorts ashore, but from the way it was handled by Dago Fiddler it might have been more valuable than the crown jewels in the Tower o' London. He would pat it, and stroke it, and hold it against him, for all the world like a woman with a baby. And when he put the bow to it—my oath!

He would give the men their jig, maybe two or three of them; then he would play the music that tightens the throat and squeezes the heart, and which we liked best to hear, although we never told him so.

In the tropics, in the fine weather of the trades, Dago Fiddler held his concerts on the fore-hatch, and all hands sat around and yarned and listened, and called for more and more, right up to muster time. Down south, when the weather was cold and dirty, he played inside the fo'c'sle, and many and many a time since I've had in my mind the picture of him standing on the heaving deck beneath the swinging lantern, humped over his fiddle, and all the rest of us lolling in our bunks or sitting on the lashed sea-chests, listening, listening, while he made his music. Aye, and as the lad played, many a time would a rough sea-bully turn his back for very shame his shipmates might spy tears upon his cheeks.

Dago Fiddler's jigs were not like the jigs we were used to. There was nothing of Paddy or Sandy in them. They were wild, mad tunes that made a man's blood tingle and the toes crawl in his boots. Fiery, foreign tunes, they were.

Foreign, too, were the other things he played. A sort of slow, fast, wailing, dago music, the kind they play sometimes in flash theaters ashore. There never was any tune to this music that a man could easily remember, and it always sounded sad. Oh, it was the saddest music we ever had heard.

It seemed sometimes as if Dago Fiddler were drawing all the misery and heartache in the world out of his fiddle; and all the tenderness and kindness, too. We would listen almost without breathing, and the pleasure of hearing was as sharp as pain.

When he played like this, his big, black eyes shone like glory. When he finished, like as not he sat down and cried. After he did this a time or two we never scoffed at his tears; we turned away or whispered to

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each other, as if we were in church. For we came to understand in that fo'c'sle that Dago Fiddler was a different sort of human from the rest of us. He was a man with a gift, and his gift tied our tongues.

BUT he was soft, soft, too soft for life on shipboard. If he had the gift of music, he had also the gift of easy tears. He cried like a soft-hearted lass, openly and unashamed. With his smooth, soft cheeks, and big, soft eyes he reminded one of a lass anyway; though there was nothing of the Nancy about him, and his voice was as rich and full as a bo'sun's. But he was soft, soft, too soft for rough, cruel life.

Many the time I saw him cry over a sunset. It was one of his few pleasures on board the *Meteor*, and during the first half of the voyage he did it regularly so long as we were in fair weather. Every evening, the dipping sun found him upon the fo'c'sle head, in the very eyes of her, staring into the west with the air of a man staring into paradise.

I'll admit it would, likely as not, be an uncommon pretty sight, especially to a soft landlubber like Dago Fiddler. The trade-wind clouds hung in that quarter of the sky, and the sunset lighted them most wonderfully. There would be gold and purple cities, shining meadows, mountains ribbed with glow and glory; there would be any marvellous, beautiful thing a mind might fancy in that western sky. Aye, it would seem an uncommon pretty sight to a person who liked pretty sights.

Such a sunset would make Dago Fiddler drunk for an hour. He drank it in, gulped it down, like it was so much good rum. Sometimes he sobbed aloud, and stretched out his arms to the west. It was plain he thought there was happy deliverance for him in that quarter. Always he said "America! America!" with a little catch in his voice, and tears upon his face.

Sometimes we laughed at him for the manner in which he spoke his only English word.

"Wait until you have carried the banner on a New York Winter's night; then you'll change your tune, Dago Fiddler," we would sing out. "Wait until the 'Frisco crimps have rolled and shanghaied you; then you'll know how to bless America!"

Dago Fiddler couldn't understand our words, but he could our tone. He would smile and shake his head, and say "America" in the same awed, happy voice a Holy Joe uses when he speaks of heaven. And I guess the two places were the same place to Dago Fiddler.

He had another habit that seemed even more strange to us. Aye, it even made some of the fo'c'sle crowd a little bit afraid of Dago Fiddler; it even made them treat him with respect. It was his habit of talking to the wind, talking softly, under his breath, in his own outlandish lingo.

He would sit and listen to the breeze humming aloft in the rigging. He would go into a trance, almost, close his eyes and sway his body. He would talk back to the wind. It was most uncanny. One would swear he was hearing voices and answering them.

Perhaps he was. For we soon found out he was picking music out of the air. Such times, he held his fiddle upon his knees; suddenly he would be playing little snatches that wove strangely and wonderfully into the wind's song, until a man couldn't truly say which sounds came from aloft and which from alow.

After we saw Dago Fiddler talk to the wind, and pick music out of the air, no bully for'ard ventured to lay a rough hand on him again. Not that the fo'c'sle became afraid of Dago Fiddler; but it was safer not to strike a man of such gifts.

He gained friends, too; or, rather, champions, for of course a lad like him, who couldn't talk and was so soft and different, could not expect to chum with sailormen after the manner of a shipmate. But Dago Portagee crossed himself and swore the Fiddler was pure of heart and talked with the saints, and maybe was part saint himself. Thereafter, of his own free will, Dago Portagee helped the lad with his work, and lost sleep doing it. Dago the Greek didn't go so far; but he let it be known that he and his sheath knife stood between the boy and bad treatment in the fo'c'sle.

But if Dago Fiddler won a measure of peace and comfort in the fo'c'sle, his lot on deck did not improve. Indeed, it grew worse. The men aft cared nothing for his music. Indeed, they hated it, because it gave pleasure to the crew. When they could, they put an end to it.

The ship left the pleasant trades, and slipped down into the roaring forties, and

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below. It grew cold, bleak, biting cold, for it was Winter in those latitudes. We caught it off the Horn, heavy and dirty, six weeks of blow and bluster, with sleet and ice and wet decks. No man was warm or dry or able to sleep out his full watch below.

Captain Creed swore he would beat Cape Stiff, and the Stiff laughed and blew us back to Staten Island and beyond every time we reached for the Ramirez. Make westing we could not. So Captain Creed beat his crew instead of Cape Stiff, and the strongest of us were worn thin and ragged with sail-handling and pulley-haul before at last we braced up to a lucky slant and clawed our way around.

In that bitter fight Down Under we fo'c'sle men did our best by Dago Fiddler, both for his own sake and because we felt our helping him spited the afterguard. He had no duffle; he owned the rags he came on board in, and a shift of underwear Dago the Greek gave him, and no more. No gear fit to show Old Stiff.

On another ship Dago Fiddler might have drawn what he needed from the slop-chest; but on board the *Metcor*, Captain Creed said no. Creed said Dago Fiddler was not a member of the crew, he earned no wages, and why should good slops be wasted upon such a swab?

So we gave Dago our cast-offs, and what gear we could spare from our own duffles. Even in those days I was handy with the needle, and I made him a canvas suit out of a piece of an old staysail I stole from the sail-locker; when it was tarred and oiled it made a passable suit of oilskins. We managed to keep the lad from freezing to death.

In return he gave us heart with his music. No day was so dark and cold but that some of the dark was lifted and cold forgotten when the evening hour came. Aye, those times in the fo'c'sle when the fiddle strummed against our ears were better than hot grog to make us forget for the moment the bitter winds and killing work, and the cruel drivers aft.

All day we looked forward to fiddling-time. So did the Fiddler. I do believe that it was only because each evening he could pour his hurt and misery into the singing wood that Dago Fiddler did not break under the hard work and harsh usage.

HE DID not reach the breaking-point until we were booming up the latitudes before a fair wind and showing a clean pair of heels to the cold, gray southern ocean. Then his distress was not caused by bad weather, which was behind us, or by the gibes and cuffs of the officers, to which he had grown used, but by the loss of his music. This happened one night at playing-time, and the third mate was the sneaky swab who brought it about.

It was the first evening in weeks that was warm and fair enough to make the forehatch a pleasant lounging-place. We were all of us—both watches—sitting about smoking and yarning and watching Dago Fiddler tune up. Mr. Letcher came for'ard as far as the galley door, and called to the lad.

"Come here, you little dago," says he; "come here, you this-and-that!"

The lad put his fiddle under his arm, and obeyed the summons.

Now it happened that Dago Fiddler had been aloft during the day, slushing down the spars. Being ever a lubber, he had fastened the slush-pot to his belt with a granny knot, and as he passed over the futtock shrouds on the main, the lanyard came adrift, and the pot fell and struck the deck, and messed it up somewhat.

There was nothing out of the ordinary about this mishap. It might have happened to any man. Dago Fiddler came down on deck and took his dressing-down with customary meekness. The second mate hit him, the third mate cursed him, and the lad got down on his knees and swabbed and rubbed until the mess was cleared up. Then he returned aloft and resumed his work, and apparently the affair was forgotten.

But it was this same little accident that gave Mr. Letcher an excuse to hurt the lad and annoy the rest of us by interrupting our concert. It was well on in the second dog-watch, and the day's work was supposed to be ended; but that made no difference to the third mate. A favorite dodge of his was to call a man up in his watch below to find a misplaced paint-brush. Just nagging.

This time he pretended Dago Fiddler hadn't wiped up the grease-spot made by the falling slush-pot clean enough. He said he could still see a mark upon the deck.

"What d'ye mean by skimping a job?" he says.

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The poor little dago smiled and bowed and cringed. He couldn't understand the words, of course, but he had grown skilled in understanding tones and gestures. He knew what the third mate referred to. He was very willing to clean the deck some more, and he made his willingness plain.

But this didn't suit Mr. Letcher. He didn't care anything about the deck; he just wanted to haze the one man in the crew he wasn't afraid of, and do it before all hands to show what a brave bucko he was.

"You smirking gutter-snipe, I'll teach you to do your work well!" he says with a side glance for'ard to see that the rest of us were properly impressed.

Then he struck Dago Fiddler, and knocked him against the side of the house.

The little fellow made no show of resistance. He never did show fight while being beaten. He wasn't the fighting kind; and anyway he knew better.

Even us tough bullies knew better than to lift a hand against an officer on board the *Meteor*, no matter what he did to us. For she was a Yankee packet, with hard cases aft, and hard laws ashore to back them up in whatever they did.

Why, there wasn't a man of us that didn't think himself able to swab the deck with that third mate, and wasn't eager for the chance. Yet we lay back and glowered, and growled curses, and did no more, while he manhandled our little shipmate. We were not afraid of Mr. Letcher, but we were afraid of the other buckos aft, and of the old devil, Creed, and of the laws and jails on shore.

Had it not been for the fiddle, the affair would have passed off like other dressings-down—Mr. Letcher would have glutted his hunger for cruelty, the little dago would have escaped with a bruised body and sore heart, and the rest of us would have growled our oaths and promptly forgotten the incident. But the third mate saw the fiddle in the boy's arms, and, of course, he realized that this was the chance for which he and his companions aft had long been waiting. He would put an end to this music nonsense that was making the *Meteor* a half-way happy ship for the crew.

"It's those —— tunes that take your mind from your work," says he. "Well, we'll just put an end to it, my son!"

With that he snatched the fiddle from Dago Fiddler's hands, and raised it high above his head to hurl it upon the deck. Oh, but we rumbled our curses then; we realized that we were the ones who were really being attacked, through the poor little dago. Yes, we cursed. But no one of us dared interfere.

But Dago Fiddler dared. Our oaths changed to gasps, for a most amazing thing happened. We were too astonished even to cheer.

It was as if a mouse had suddenly turned into a tiger. For meek, soft little Dago Fiddler flew at the third mate's throat. It was as if a tiger were born in him when his fiddle was endangered. A tiger that leaped without delay; a tiger, aye, or a woman defending her child, for Dago Fiddler fought with tooth and nail and queer animal-like screams of rage, tearing and clawing with frenzy at the officer's sacred person.

Mr. Letcher was just as surprized as the rest of us. The last thing he could have expected was a fight with Dago Fiddler. Instead of hurling it to destruction, he merely dropped the fiddle; and he fell back to the bulwarks, vainly parrying the attack and calling out for help in a frightened voice.

He might as well have tried to push back the wind with his hands as keep the boy at a distance. Dago Fiddler was a madman that moment, with a madman's strength and viciousness. He left his mark upon his enemy.

OF COURSE, the shindy lasted but a moment. The second mate came running for'ard to the third mate's call. He was a champion bully, and he very soon put an end to Dago Fiddler's madness. One well-placed blow upon the jaw, and the boy was lying unconscious upon the deck beside his fiddle.

The third mate rushed to the crumpled body and lifted his big foot to finish the job in proper hell-ship style. He was fairly twisted with rage; aye, he was a furious man, and minded to take a cruel revenge. But he didn't; not then at least, for the thought of him giving the boots to the helpless lad exploded the smoldering rage in us.

Now if Mr. Buck had commenced to kick the lad I dare say we would have held our peace; for it was the second mate, you see, who had subdued the Fiddler, and besides he was a real bucko and a very hard case indeed. But the sight of the other sneaking swab preparing to do the job enraged us beyond all reason. Our curses roared and

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menaced like a gale, and we moved aft as one man.

Mr. Letcher took one look at us, and we could see the fear take sudden hold of him and knot his insides. He forgot his revenge. He cringed backward until he reached the side of his brother officer; and he even slipped behind the other's protecting bulk.

You might think that the second mate would have taken a hand then. But not Bully Buck. He laughed uproariously. To him it was a good joke upon the third mate, whom he heartily despised.

He might easily have withstood and routed the lot of us; he knew that, and we knew it. But he had performed his duty when he knocked out the lad, and he made it plain he wasn't going to trouble himself further in the matter.

"Carry that fool to his bunk, and heave that fiddle over the side!" he roared at us.

Then he snorted contemptuously into the third mate's very face, and turned and clumped away aft. Mr. Letcher trotted after him with his head upon his shoulder to make sure none of us slipped up behind him or threw anything at his hated back.

So we carried Dago Fiddler to his bunk. But we didn't throw the fiddle overboard. We had that much courage; we would disobey the buckos so long as their eyes were not upon us. We knew that Dago Fiddler would rather we threw him overboard than his fiddle. It was quite undamaged, not even cracked or scratched by its fall, and we picked it up and placed it in Dago Fiddler's arms.

And when he presently came to, we gathered about his bunk and explained the situation to him. Dago the Greek, who better than any of us could make him understand things, told him with words and motions that music-making was done with on that ship, and that the violin was ordered into the sea.

My word, it was a cruel, hard job, that explaining; it was like sentencing the lad to death by torture. There was a husky catch in Dago the Greek's voice, and a deal of nose-blowing and coughing among the rest of us as we stood about and watched the understanding slowly creep into Dago Fiddler's eyes and his bruised face settle into an expression of mingled pain and horror.

The lad answered nothing in words. There was nothing he could say save "America," and I guess his America seemed very far away that moment. He just hugged his fiddle and looked at us with his great, soft eyes wide open, and after a while the big tears rolled out of the corners of his eyes. He said nothing to us with his tongue but his tears talked.

We found the silent weeping harder to stand than if the lad had raised the roof with grieving howls. Dago Portagee couldn't stand it at all. So after the manner of his countrymen he went off into a great rage.

"Eet es a weeckedness to do," cries he. "Eef we dump the feeddle, then very soon we mus' dump the Feeddler. Eet ees murder?"

He went to his ditty-box and got his crucifix; and then he laid his sheath-knife upon the cross and swore a great oath in his own hot lingo. His act gave us fear, for we all knew that when a dago took oath in such fashion he was in earnest.

"Eef the feeddle ees dumped, I weel get even for the Feeddler," says he. "That —— third mate, I weel cut out his eensides!"

He meant it. He would do it, we knew. We also knew that such a murder would be but the beginning of bloodshed on board that hell-ship. That is why we were afraid.

It was Dago the Greek who saved us from tragedy. He was a man of quick wit, and obeying orders was not such a habit with him as with the rest of us. Save him, no man of us was bold enough to imagine any fate for the fiddle except Davy Jones' locker. Even Dago Portagee, who was willing to kill, had no other thought about the cause of the trouble. Had not the afterguard ordered it over the side?

But Dago the Greek had a plan. He did not tell it to us; he was much too wise for that. He knew how gossip spreads, and that every fo'c'sle has its talebearer.

But he took Dago Portagee aside and talked with him, with the result that Dago Portagee's anger departed, and he was first surprized and then gleeful. Then he motioned to Dago Fiddler to follow him with his fiddle, and the three went out on deck into the dusk.

We did not follow, or look after them. We sat and looked at each other, and waited. In a little while they came back, and said the fiddle was in the sea. We murmured and winked at each other, and let it go at that. And later at muster when the second

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mate demanded, "Did you dump that fiddle?" Dago the Greek spoke up and said, "We did," and no man, even if he had wished, could have gainsaid him.

THE end of the fiddling marked the end of all peace and pleasure for us poor devils for'ard. From that day on the *Meteor* became a blood-ship for fair. My solemn oath! The ship was reaching up for the Line, and for the California coast beyond, and the mates had their reputations as buckos to safeguard.

Hammering the crowd, and driving it to the raw edge of mutiny during the fag-end of a passage, was what bucko mates were paid extra money for doing; it was what Captain Creed and the owners expected of them. It would make all hands clear out of the ship just as soon as we made port, you see, and leave our wages behind.

And we had something else to make us miserable besides the driving of the bullies aft. That strange distemper of the spirit, which nearly always falls upon the crew of a windjammer when she is a long time out of port, fell upon us. We became sick to death of the sight of each other, of the sound of each other's voices, of the ship and the sea.

So long as we had Dago Fiddler's music to pleasure our souls, we thought each other good fellows, and were as peaceable a crowd as ever I sailed with. But when that was taken from us we lost the thing which kept us human and brotherly. The sailors' sickness gripped the fo'c'sle, and we became like wild beasts who have been too long caged together.

Hate and violence became part of the air we breathed. Little things, like a word, or look, or gesture, were sufficient to cause good friends to spring wildly at each other's throats.

There was never a watch on deck that the mates did not hammer us about; and there was never a watch below when some of us did not thump each other. Every man wore bruises. Little, silly statements or arguments, that in other days would have passed unnoticed, would divide us into opposing gangs.

Why, I remember one evening at supper a discussion started about Queen Victoria. A fellow we called "Liverpool" says she was the best woman that ever lived.

"Well, now, I guess if all the truth was known," says "Long Sam" Peeble of Boston, "she wouldn't be considered so high."

That was all, but in five seconds all the limejuicers in the fo'c'sle were trying their best to murder all the Yanks, and the dagoes and squareheads were taking sides and joining in on general principles. We raged and rioted all over the for'ard decks until the afterguard turned out and gave us a taste of handspikes and belaying-pins that quite filled our warlike stomachs.

When it was over, we found that Yarkel, the Finn, had a fractured arm, another lad nursed a knife-thrust in the shoulder, while a round dozen of us sported marred features and broken crowns. Aye, it was a fine shindy; as fine as I have ever seen or taken part in.

And of course it settled exactly nothing, after the way of most fights. For days and weeks afterward men would fly at each other, and beat each other up, over that burning question of Queen Victoria's goodness.

Now, you can fancy how little Dago Fiddler fared during these bad times. I've noticed that in wartime it is the peaceable fellow who suffers most. Well, from the day the fiddle disappeared there was a state of war on board the *Meteor*, of dirty, cut-throat war which brought out of each man the worst that was in him.

Aye, Dago Fiddler felt the full weight of the evil that lay so heavy upon the ship. Somebody must be made to suffer for our misery. The buckos aft, who were the chief cause of it, we could not reach with our hate and spite; but we could reach each other, and above all we could reach Dago Fiddler. We could blame him for the bad times; and we did.

We forgot he was different from the rest of us, of finer make; we forgot to be kind to him; not even the fists and knives of his brother dagoes could now save him from the fo'c'sle's displeasure. The music was gone, so we had no use for Dago Fiddler. We called him Jonah.

So Dago Fiddler crept about like a dispirited shadow, and there were bruises upon his soft flesh. And each day his cheeks were a little hollower, and his eyes a little bigger and sadder. He swam in a sea of pain, my oath he did! Not even his blessed America could brighten him; he seemed to forget there was such a land, or that the voyage would ever end.

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Not once, after he lost his fiddle, did he watch a sunset. Even his hope was gone. That's how ill Dago Fiddler fared.

On deck he was hazed and ragged and driven about without a moment's rest. All three mates took a hand in paying him back for having dared to raise a hand against Mr. Letcher. For while Bully Buck and Blackjack Fitzgibbon might despise the third mate, they were bound, as brother officers, to back him up. Besides, they could teach the rest of us a lesson by making an example of Dago Fiddler.

The dressings-down they gave him, added to the cuffs and curses he earned from his shipmates for'ard, were enough to break down a strong man. He got so nervous that a sharp word or look would give him a shaking ague; and there came a haunt into his face.

One night the watch was called for a little job of shortening sail. It was but a mild squall that fell upon us, and the watch on deck could have doused the kites handily enough without bothering the lads below, but at this stage of the voyage it was not the buckos' habit to give the crew any peace that could be avoided. So it was all hands, "and be quick about it, you swabs!" and out we tumbled with groans and oaths, and lay to the job with as bad humor as we dared show.

Little Dago Fiddler was with us, of course, blundering in the dark in his usual lubberly fashion. He got in our way, and hindered us; so, since we couldn't get even with the mates, we got even with him. Aye, every man-jack of us—save only the Greek and the Portagee—took a dig at Dago Fiddler with a boot, or fist, or at least a tongue.

We called him Jonah, and, my oath, he proved he was. We were at the main, clewing up the royal; our spite made him clumsier than usual, and by ill-fortune he laid hold of the t'gallant sheet in the darkness, and cast it off the pin. There was a great swishing and flapping aloft as the wind lifted the canvas; then the wind found some rotten stitches, and before we could lay hold of and belay the dancing rope, the big sail was half-ripped out of its bolt-ropes.

NOW this was a really terrible thing to happen on board any ship. To cast free a sheet by mistake—lubberliness could hardly go any further. To have such a thing happen on board the *Meteor*, where "Bristol fashion" was the law and lubberliness a crime, was almost more than a man could imagine. For a couple of moments after it happened, we were all—men and mates—too shocked to even swear.

Then a shrill, stabbing scream broke against our ears. It pricked every last man of us into frightened attention, and it threw the wretched little Dago Fiddler into such a trembling fit we could hear his teeth rattle together. Aye, the squall had passed by, and in the bright moonlight we could plainly see the lad; he had shrunk away from the body of us, and was standing alone, staring aft. He was quite stupid with terror.

Good reason he had for his fright. My oath! For the noise we heard was the fury of Captain Creed himself. We could see him leaning over the poop rail, his white whiskers blowing about his face and his cruel gash of a mouth opening and shutting as he cursed.

It was not his hot words, but the sudden sight and sound of this wicked old hermit, who was known in every port and fo'c'sle for his seamanship and cruelties, that shocked us. Yet his words were shocking enough, even to our calloused ears. He damned all hands, from mate to boy. Then, when his breath was near-gone, he says—

"Mr. Mate, you attend to the man who let go that sheet!"

"Yes, sir," cries Mr. Fitzgibbon; and even as he spoke the words he swung his long arm and caught the dumb, waiting lad a back-handed cuff that smashed him against the fife-rail, "Now, mister, here's your meat!" he added in a lower voice to the third mate.

Here was Mr. Letcher's chance to get his revenge in full, to redeem himself in his own eyes, if not in ours. He was not slow to grasp it; he fell upon Dago Fiddler with fist and foot before a man could say "Jack Robinson." He rushed the lad out of the shadow of the main course; when he had him upon the moon-bathed open deck, where the Old Man could see what a fine job his bucko was making of it, he cuffed the boy this way and that and knocked him down and danced upon his body.

Poor Dago Fiddler—we all felt sorry for him, of course. But fear of a like fate was strong enough to clap a stopper upon the tongue of the bravest of us. Besides, we

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had no time to sympathize; the other two buckos were at our heels, driving us about sail-handling. just as if a human being wasn't being pounded half to jelly almost within arm's reach. The entertainment wasn't for us, it was for Captain Creed.

Just how it fared with Dago Fiddler none of us could tell. I saw him knocked down. The next time I glanced over my shoulder, I saw the boy upon his feet. He was running for'ard, runnning away from the bully's blows, and Mr. Letcher was in hot pursuit. Then the vessel gave a gentle roll, and the third mate lost his balance and sat down hard, so hard the breath. must have been driven out of his body, for he chopped off an oath in mid-course and did not at once regain his feet.

Dago Fiddler disappeared into the gloom thrown upon the for'ard deck by the fore-sail. A second later we heard his voice in a long, mournful wail, a cry of agony that sent a shiver to the toes of each man of us. It was followed by dead silence.

The next time I looked, the third mate had also gone into the darkness for'ard. We could hear him poking about underneath the fo'c'sle head, cursing and threatening and commanding Dago Fiddler to come out and show himself.

After a bit, Mr. Letcher came aft alone. There was something in the way he walked, and in the tone of his voice, that moved into the forefront of our minds a dreadful thought that had lurked in the background. Aye, for Dago Fiddler's cry had seemed to come from the very bows of the ship!

"Well, mister, what's become of that brat?" sang out the Old Man from the poop.

"He must be hiding, sir; but I'll soon have him out of it!" says Mr. Letcher.

He roused out the carpenter, and when that fellow showed a light the pair of them went for'ard to continue the search.

But none of us hands were permitted to assist the searchers, you may lay to that! Aye, the mates and the skipper were thinking just what the rest of us were thinking; they knew that for once their hazing had gone a bit too far. If any sight were to be seen for'ard it was to be for the eyes of the afterguard alone. So the whole crowd of us were held in the waist, and sweated at useless work, while the lantern bobbed about for'ard.

Finally the third mate and Chips came aft again. As soon as they were within easy talking distance of the poop, the skipper hailed Mr. Letcher.

"Well, well, sir, what d'ye say?" says he.

Mr. Letcher faltered and stuttered a little in his answer. The soul of him was shaken. He had not the hardness of the others, and no doubt he was appalled by his intelligence. But being what he was, he made shift to speak bravely and carelessly enough.

"The fellow is not on board, captain," says he. "We found his cap on the fo'c'sle head ladder, but the dago himself is gone."

Captain Creed cleared his throat.

"Well, well, indeed?" he says. "Now that is too bad. Temporary insanity, no doubt. Mr. Mate, you'll see it is properly entered in the log."

With that he went below to the cabin. Our captain wasn't going to bother his head any more about a —— stowaway.

Nor were our mates. Mr. Fitzgibbon spoke to the second mate in a tone purposely loud enough for the rest of us to hear.

"Temporary insanity, eh? The little bum hopped over the side after his fiddle. Good riddance, say I."

Then he roared at us:

"Well, you farmers, what are you loafing there for? Lay hold of the fore braces, lively now, or we'll make some more of you feel like taking a walk on the sea!"

SUCH was Dago Fiddler's burial service; and we sang his requiem at the lee braces, with a curse and a groan and a yo-heave-ho. And presently, when the watch was sent below to resume its broken rest, we filed into the fo'c'sle, and thought and talked the thing over.

You might think we raved and raged; but no, this was too terrible a happening for such antics. We were too shaken by the occurrence to be noisy. Instead we crawled into our bunks, or sat upon our chests, and when we spoke it was to rumble beneath our breaths.

We avoided each other's eyes, and talked about Dago Fiddler, what a fine lad he was, how gifted, and how different from the rest of us. No man said it aloud, but each was thinking—

"Oh, why didn't I, myself, treat the lad decently!"

It was this bitter taste of our own cruelties in our mouths, I guess, that kept us from

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raging against the murderers aft. We had a feeling of guilt to season our sorrow.

Yet our grief was real, and it did a wonderful work in that fo'c'sle. It cut through the hard shells that surrounded our hearts, even as Dago Fiddler's music had done. We felt strangely drawn together and friendly toward each other, even as we had felt during those bitter nights off the Horn when the fiddle put heart into us. The boy seemed to have taken our mutual hates over the side with him.

"—— blimme, 'e was too good to be shipmates with the likes o' us!" says Liverpool.

"That's right; we weren't fit to black his boots," says Boston Sam.

Boston Sam sat down beside Liverpool, and the pair of them touched shoulders in peace. The rest of us knew that the feud that had distracted us was ended.

So we talked and smoked, and by common consent avoided mention of the Old Man and the third mate and the manner of Dago Fiddler's giving up his mess number. The fact of his going was too new and awful for us to feel glib; besides, there was a common feeling that whatever was to be said or done should be said or done by the two men who were closest to Dago Fiddler; by Dago Portagee, who had worshiped the lad, and by Dago the Greek, who had stood by him as a friend when he was bedeviled and reviled by the rest of us.

At that moment Dago the Greek was on deck. He had not come below with the watch. We thought he preferred grieving alone. But Dago Portagee had come below, and crawled into his bunk and buried his face in the mattress.

Now of a sudden Dago Portagee roused himself. He opened his chest and took out his ditty-box. Aye, and every eye was upon him.

He got his cross and beads out of the box; and when we saw the glint of them in his hand we sighed gustily and then for a moment forgot to breathe. We thought Dago Portagee was about to take his vow of vengeance. We expected it of him; we expected the third mate, and perhaps the captain himself, would feel the bite of Dago Portagee's knife. This seemed to us to be right and justice.

But Dago Portagee disappointed us. He was not taking a vow, he was clicking the beads and telling prayers.

"Oh, well," thought we, "he'll turn the trick all in good time. Trust a dago to get even."

Dago Portagee paid no attention to us. He dropped to his knees upon the fo'c'sle deck, and said his prayers in his own lingo; and as he prayed he lifted his face to the ceiling, and we could see the tears drop into his black beard. We were all very solemn while Dago Portagee prayed, for we knew he was praying for the soul of Dago Fiddler.

Dago the Greek came into the fo'c'sle while the Portagee was still upon his knees. The Greek was excited, I could tell that by the shine in his eyes, and by the way he kept opening and shutting his hands. He sat down and waited with bowed head until Dago Portagee was through. Then he says:

"The fiddle—it ees gone. He take it weeth him."

Dago Portagee got up and stared at Dago the Greek. Then he went out on deck. The Greek followed him.

We looked at each other, and shook our heads. That Dago Fiddler had taken his treasure with him, from whatever hiding-place it had rested in, seemed quite the proper thing to us. Loving it so, he would hardly have left it behind when he went over the bows.

For a long time the two dagoes stood outside the door and talked in undertones. We had no doubt they were planning to avenge their friend.

But we made no attempt to eavesdrop, or pry into their plans. My word, no! This getting even with the afterguard was too dangerous a business for any of us to wish to meddle with.

We hoped something evil would happen to the third mate and Captain Creed, but we didn't want a hand in the event or foreknowledge of it. We wanted to be able to swear with clear consciences that we didn't know anything about it. So we left the dagoes severely alone, and turned into our bunks for a little precious sleep before eight bells went again.

Next day we went about our work with jumpy nerves and great expectations. Each time one of the mates passed within striking-distance of Dago the Greek or Dago Portagee our weather eyes would lift, and we would be sure —— was about to break loose.

But it never did. Nothing happened.

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The two dagoes behaved as if they never meant to break the peace.

"It's the daylight," we said to each other. "They are a slick pair; they'll wait for a dark night to get even."

That night was a dark night. It was a hot, black, doldrums night, with a water-filled sky emptying itself upon the ship at intervals, and the ghost of a wind chasing itself around the compass.

The mates chased us around the decks in a mad effort to catch the wind. There were plenty of chances in that black confusion for undetected knife-wielding, and more than once the third mate was within arm's reach. But nothing happened.

"Those dagoes haven't got the nerve to do it!" we said to each other.

We were disgusted. We didn't have the nerve either, but we didn't think of that. We felt it was the duty of the two dagoes to do some wild and bloody deed of vengeance. Hadn't they been Dago Fiddler's close friends?

"A fine pair of friends!" said we. "Out of sight, out of mind!"

For we noticed that the dagoes chatted and smiled and scoffed their whack just as we did, just as if nothing had happened.

BUT two nights later something did happen. My blinking eye, yes! I can't think of it even at this day without a cold shiver running the length of my insides.

It was hot and dark and almost breathless, like the nights before it, because we had not yet picked up the trades. My watch had the mid-watch on deck, and when we turned out we thought we were in for the same old weary pulley-haul in pursuit of puffs of wind. There was sheet lightning playing about in the southern sky.

We were coiling down the fore running gear, after a turn at the braces, when Liverpool suddenly says—

"My ——, wot's that?"

I looked aloft, where he pointed. On the weather tip of the foret'gallant yardarm was a big ball of St. Elmo's fire. Even as I looked, it began to move; it rolled in to the mast, and out upon the lee yardarm, then it rolled back to the weather side.

My oath, my blood was freezing in my veins! My mates were just as frightened as I. We believed, every one of us, that the ghostly light aloft was the soul of Dago Fiddler come back to visit us. For that was the fo'c'sle notion of St. Elmo's fire in those days; it was the soul of a drowned sailor. We rushed aft in a body, so afraid were we of the thing aloft.

Mr. Fitzgibbon soon drove us for'ard again.

"What, you stupid fools?" says he. "I'll show you what kind of a ghost it is. Here, you, Baines (he named me) and you, Boston, up aloft and overhaul the t'gallant buntlines! My ——, what a crowd o' farmers—afraid of a corposant!"

There was nothing for Boston and me to do except climb into the rigging and start aloft. Facing a ghost was easier than refusing to obey one of the mate's orders. We climbed, as slowly as we might, and the mate blackguarded us from the deck.

Going over the futtock shrouds, I lost sight of the light for an instant. When I paused, in the top, for a good look at it, I found it was again in motion. It had hopped upon the royal sheet; it ran up the leech of the sail, disappeared behind the canvas for a second and reappeared upon the royal yard.

It seemed as if the thing were retreating before our advance, giving us warning, in a way, that it didn't want us to come too close. Anyway, that is the way Boston and I felt. We didn't want to get too close.

We ignored the mate's yelling, and hung in the top, watching the thing. It was about the size of a man's head, and it expanded and contracted, just as if it were breathing; aye, and although it was so far above us, I was willing to swear I could see a human face inside that glow.

It danced upon the yard for a moment, then ran up the mast to the truck and suddenly disappeared. It went out, just as a candle goes out when blown upon.

"He's gone," says Boston. "Thank Heaven."

I took a breath of relief, and lifted a foot half-way to the ratline above the one upon which I was standing. For the mate was suspiciously silent down below, and aloft was the job we were sent to do. But I didn't get above the foretop. Not that night. My oath!

For Boston suddenly reached out and gripped my arm.

"Oh, Lord!" he says. "Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!"

I didn't say anything. I couldn't. My

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tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth. I could only listen.

The mate's voice sounded at our heels. The bucko had come aloft to see what was keeping us. He had come up prepared to put wings upon our feet.

"What in —— are you standing—" he began.

Then he stopped. His tongue stuck, too. He heard what we heard.

We heard the sound of a fiddle being played somewhere!

It wasn't human music. It was ghost music. It came in snatches; a few notes would reach us very, very faint, as if it came from some other world, then a bit would come very strong, from somewhere right around us. It had no direction; it seemed to come from above, below, from all around. Ghost music; my Lord, yes!

We knew the tune. It was one of the wild jigs Dago Fiddler played. It was as if he were flying around the ship, aloft and alow, playing the devil's dance as he flew!

The sounds stopped, and my heart, which had been stopped, started going again. Aye, it seemed about to hammer its way out of my breast!

I couldn't have said a word if my life depended upon it; my throat was closed. Nor did Boston say anything.

But Mr. Fitzgibbon, with a quaver instead of a menace in his voice, managed to rip out an oath and exclaim—

"What devil's business is this?"

That was all he said, for just then there came the sound of music being played just in front of us. Aye, it was so. So strong were the strains, and so fresh, they seemed to be played right there in front of us, within arm's reach, right there upon the foretop.

We could see there was nobody, nothing, there. Yet that is where the music came from.

It was too much for me. I wrenched a yell of fright out of my throat that sounded but little louder than a whisper, and jumped for a backstay. It was too much for Boston; he followed me. And it was too much for the bucko.

I heard him gasp, and the sound of something striking sharply upon the deck below. We picked this something up afterward; it was the belaying-pin Mr. Fitzgibbon had carried aloft with him, and with which he was going to put the fear o' God into two loafers. But he had a taste of the fear himself. My solemn oath!

He started deckward, and I never saw a man get out of a ship's rigging so quickly without falling. Boston and I were in a hurry ourselves, but by the time we slid down to the sheerpole the mate was already inboard and hustling aft as if the Evil One were at his heels.

THE rest of that watch was a farmers' watch, the first farmers' watch that workhouse of a ship had ever known, I dare say. We loafed, because no word came from the poop to do otherwise.

Not only Boston and I and the mate had heard the music; all hands had heard it. The man on lookout heard it, and he came down from the fo'c'sle head and refused to go back alone. The whole watch gathered abaft the house, talking about it in whispers, and keeping close together.

We knew we were a haunted ship, and we were afraid.

Somebody went into the fo'c'sle and woke up the starboard watch and told them about it. Most of those lads turned out and joined us. It was a council of all hands that huddled whispering abaft the house; but we could only agree that evil hung over the ship. We heartened each other with our talk.

"It is not us Dago Fiddler has come to haunt," we said; "it is the buckos aft, who drove him to his death, that he is after."

At four bells Liverpool went aft to relieve Irish Dick at the wheel. Dick came hurrying for'ard, a regular question mark.

"What is ut?" he says. "Holy ——, what's happened? Here's sail-trimmin' to do, and the lookout not strikin' his bells at all, and there's the mate running up and down the poop like his heels had the itch and with a look in his face like he's clapped eyes on Davy Jones himself, bedad!"

We told him. Then he understood why the mate had a look in his face. Irish Dick had not heard the music, being so far aft, but he says he knew something terrible was hanging about the ship. Three times while he stood at the wheel he felt drafts of cold wind pass by him, wind that seemed to come from the icy Horn, and we were in the sweltering tropics.

It was ghost air he felt, that's what it was, says Irish Dick. It meant ill for the ship,

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and especially for the afterguard, he says, in agreement with us.

So we talked and agreed until the end of the watch. But when Mr. Buck came up and took the deck, our council was at an end. For Bully Buck was a hard case who boasted he feared neither God, man nor devil, and that included ghosts.

We could only guess what the mate told him, there on the poop, but Mr. Buck roared with laughter. He came for'ard with a mouthful of orders, and we of the port watch hustled below to be out of his way.

"It's ghosts you're afraid of, is it?" was the way Mr. Buck put it to his crowd. "Well, now, m'sons, I'll make ghosts out of you if you don't watch your steps!"

That day the starbo'lines were bitter against us lads to port, for the second mate had driven them cruelly, and no sight or sound came to drive him aft. They felt it was unfair, and some of them said openly they didn't believe Dago Fiddler had come back.

It nearly came to blows between us, but Dago the Greek prevented that. He was a wise lad, was the Greek. He appealed to Yarkel, the Finn, who was bedridden with his broken arm, and who was a member of the starboard watch.

Now, Yarkel was looked up to by his watch, and in fact by the entire fo'c'sle. For he came out of a country where witches are as thick as pebbles on a seashore, and like most Finns he had a certain power over the winds. We knew he could bring a gale by cutting a cross in the mainmast, and a calm by sticking his knife into the foremast. Besides, he could explain dreams, and that was a great gift.

Yarkel said he had been lying awake and had heard the ghost music. Then, he said, he fell asleep and dreamed. He dreamed he was on lookout, and a tall black man without a face had come on board over the bows. He was dripping wet, was this black man, and when he walked long trailers of wet seaweed dragged behind him. He went aft, said Yarkel, and his feet made no sound upon the deck.

We were much impressed. We asked Yarkel what he thought about his dream.

"I tank it ban Dago Fiddle," says he in his squarehead brogue.

"But Dago Fiddler was not black or tall," some of us objected.

Yarkel got mad because we doubted him. It didn't make any difference, says he, what size Dago Fiddler was when alive. The tall black man without a face was either Dago Fiddler, or he was the devil, come on board to claim his own, and he, Yarkel, knew what he knew, and if he told us what he knew we would be at our prayers that very minute. With that he turned his face to the bulkhead, and not another word could we pry out of him.

But what he told us was enough. It shut up the doubters, and confirmed our fears. Aye, Yarkel gave us something to worry about. For ghost or devil, whichever it was, how could we be sure it was after the afterguard? We told each other we were sure, but we weren't. For we of the fo'c'sle knew but too well we had treated Dago Fiddler none too kindly when we had him with us.

We did not have much time to mope and imagine, however, for that day we picked up the nor'east trades and braced her up for the last long traverse of the passage. That meant a day of work. My oath, it did!

With daylight the mate seemed to get over his fright. Just how he felt about it we, of course, did not know. But we had it from the cook, who had it from the cabin boy, that Mr. Fitzgibbon had words with Captain Creed at breakfast, and the Old Man called him a silly fool for believing in sailors' superstitions, and maybe in sailors' tricks.

It seemed to us that morning that the mate was determined to work us to death just to get even for being frightened. Yet we did note a difference in him; my eye yes! His curses had not their usual sting and not once did he lay rough hands upon a man.

AT EIGHT bells, midnight, while the watches were changing, Dago Fiddler came again to the ship.

We were mustered in the waist, both watches of us, as was the custom. Mr. Buck had just appeared upon the poopdeck, at the mate's side, and we were waiting for his "Relieve wheel and lookout!"

We heard his greeting to the mate, a chuckle, and, "Well, mister, did you see your friend tonight?" Before the mate could answer, Dago Fiddler was with us.

It was the music again. There was no

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mistaking it; it was Dago Fiddler's fiddling. It came to our ears from for'ard, strong and fresh upon the light breeze. The lookout came to us from for'ard, too, with staring eyes and his throat a-gurgle with terror.

"My ——, mates, he's playing on the forehatch," says he, "but mortal eyes can't see him!"

Mr. Buck came down from the poop and joined us on the main deck. But he said nothing, and made no move to go farther for'ard alone. The mate ran aft and sang out through the cabin skylight—

"Captain, captain, it's here!"

A moment later the Old Man burst out of the cabin alleyway, with Mr. Letcher at his heels.

The captain stood for a moment in the strong light of the alleyway lamp, staring for'ard and listening. We could see his face. He was not frightened; he was angry.

But the third mate was frightened. Aye, he cringed and shook behind the captain, cringed and shook like little Dago Fiddler cringed and shook before he was chased overboard.

"Come with me," says the Old Man shortly, addressing his officers in general, "and we'll see about this —— nonsense!"

He pushed through the crowd of us without seeming to notice we were there, and stamped for'ard. The three mates tagged reluctantly after him. Unbidden, we followed them.

It was just as the lookout said: the music was being played upon the forehatch. But nobody was there; the hatch was empty, just as empty as the foretop had been, the night before.

It was a clear, fine night, with stars and a quarter moon. We could see plainly. The hatch was an empty square of black canvas. Yet from it came the music.

It was one of Dago Fiddler's wailing, heart-wrenching dago tunes that was being played. We recognized it; aye, every man-jack knew it at once. Dago Fiddler had played it often when he sat upon the forehatch in the flesh. He played it now most wonderfully; it would come very soft, very far away, then it would swell and swell until he seemed to be scraping his bow beneath our very noses.

We shrank back, all of us, men and mates back to the rail and as far aft as we could go without losing sight of that magic, music-filled space, and we listened and feared. The third mate was at my elbow, and I could feel him shaking. A sorry bucko he was become, my word!

But Captain Creed was of a different breed from his mates, of a harder, tougher breed. Or maybe it was just that he had lived longer, and his soul was more thickly coated with evil. For old Creed didn't press back to the rail and become dumb. Not he.

He walked right up to the music. He climbed upon the hatch and walked across it with arms outstretched, and I thought to myself—

"By Heaven, he's brave!"

But he could not catch the ghost of Dago Fiddler in that silly fashion. He walked right through the music, and his hands were empty; he crisscrossed the hatch, and stamped upon it, and put his ear to the tarpaulin, and stared aloft—and he discovered nothing. And all the time the music swirled about him.

Then Captain Creed flew into a rage and cursed terribly. Aye, he shook his fists under the noses of the mates and called them old women. He damned the lot of us for stupid, cowardly fools. He swore it was all a trick.

"I'll find out who is responsible for this," he says, "and I'll keelhaul the swab, I'll crucify him, I'll make him sorry he was born!"

Aye, that is the way Captain Creed carried on; and when he was out of breath and quiet, we discovered that the music had died away. There was silence upon the forehatch.

"*Hah!* So he heard me, did he?" says the Old Man.

We frightened men, we believers, said nothing. We had no chance. For before we could let down, and find any words, the music started up again.

But it had moved; this time it came from aloft, from the very spot it had come from the night before, from the foretop. It seemed as if Dago Fiddler were annoyed by the captain's harsh threats, and was gone aloft to escape them.

Now the moon shone full upon the foretop, and we could see it was empty of life. Yet the notes that came down to us were alive. Aye, there was a wonderful and dreadful life in them. For Dago Fiddler had changed his tune; what he played now

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was his own song, the wind song, the song we had watched him pick out of the air when the ship sailed in the Atlantic trades.

We had always been a little afraid of that tune. It had seemed unhuman music. And to hear it now, coming to us out of the night, from nowhere, soft and strong and sweet, winding in and out among the sea noises, losing itself in the hum of the breeze through the cordage, finding itself in the purr and lap of the water against the ship was awful!

The soul of Dago Fiddler seemed to settle upon the ship like some sweet and penetrating gas. It went everywhere. It went inside of us, and squeezed our hearts and dissolved our hardness into water. Men cried aloud in terror and great sorrow. Letcher's sin became too heavy for his shaking legs, and he fell upon his knees and moaned. We were like little children, believing, hearing, wishing for more, more.

Captain Creed would not give in. He fought against the music, against believing. "It isn't, it can't be!" he cried. "I tell you, misters, it's nonsense!"

But his voice was not as certain as it had been, and he did not go aloft to the empty foretop, as he had gone upon the empty forehatch.

Aye, the Old Man would not give in, but he was beaten. The soul of him was shaken. When the music ended he went aft without a look or a word for mates or crew, and shut himself up in his room.

The starbo'lines had a farmers' watch that night. For Mr. Buck would not leave the poop, and what orders he gave he gave in whispers. But the starboard watch was not made happy thereby. No; all of us in that ship were feeling mighty solemn.

Captain Creed was a hard man to convince. Next morning he made a final effort to lay the ghost. After breakfast he and the mates came for'ard and tumbled the lot of us out on deck.

Then the afterguard searched the ship; aye, they went over it with a fine-tooth comb. They went into the fo'c'sle and looked into every chest, beneath every bunk; they searched the carpenter-shop and galley; they overlooked no hole where a man, or rat, might be hidden. They had the caps off the chain-lockers, they searched the paint-locker and the bosun's locker, and they went down into the forepeak and poked about among the coal-sacks and worn-out gear with which the place was filled. They discovered nothing.

Then Captain Creed had Chips open the forehatch. As if any living thing could have gotten through a battened hatch! That general cargo filled her to the very brim; there was not room for a baby, let alone a man, to squeeze in among the boxes and barrels.

So the Old Man ordered the hatch secured again, and as before went aft without a word. But we saw and read his face. Captain Creed was convinced; and the fear had gripped him.

IT GRIPPED him no tighter than it gripped us. Aye, all hands on board the *Meteor*, the 'foremast crowd, the tradesmen, the cabin gang, every last man-jack on board the hooker, felt the fear. We were like little children left alone in a dark place; our fear was of the unknown. It is a terrible fear.

Dago Portagee got out his cross and wore it openly, outside his shirt. Nor did any man laugh at him; no, not even the mates. In the fo'c'sle we took the hint, and there was a great whittling-bee while crosses were being carved into the heads of bunks. This might protect us, we hoped, while we lay asleep.

Dago the Greek went around shaking his head very solemnly. He says over and over that he was very glad poor Dago Fiddler could have no grudge against him, for he had treated the boy kindly. This made the men who had treated Dago Fiddler unkindly feel very unhappy. Old Jim Deems began to read his Bible.

Jim Deems had a beautiful Bible. He had stolen it from a Seaman's Rest in Melbourne the voyage before, because, he said, he liked to look at the colored pictures it contained. But now he was sore afraid, and inclined to religion.

For Jim Deems had been Dago Fiddler's chief tormentor among the crew. He was a hard, wicked old man, was Jim Deems, a gray-bearded shell-back who had not long to live, for drink and vice had stolen his health. He had never cared for the music, but he loved to haze the boy.

When he was a lad in the Crimean War, said Jim Deems, an able seaman would rope's-end a boy for looking sideways. And that's the way he had treated Dago Fiddler.

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Jim Deems found the place in the Bible where it says "an eye for an eye" and "a tooth for a tooth" and "a life for a life." That was bad reading for him. He lay in his bunk and read it out loud; then he stuck his head over the bunk-edge and stared down at us. There was the same look in his eyes that you'll see in the eyes of a Holy Joe.

"Oh, Lord, mates, did ye 'ear the Word o' God?" says Jim Deems. "It says that gettin' even is the Law!"

"Does the Book ever lie?" says Dago the Greek very solemnly.

Jim Deems groaned, and lay back in his bunk. But presently he bobbed up again, and began to talk. Aye, and with his first words I knew what he was up to. The old sinner was afraid Dago Fiddler was aiming to get even with him, and he was going to try and win Dago Fiddler's forgiveness by helping him get even with his enemies aft.

" 'A life for a life,' it says; now what does that mean?" is the way Jim Deems went at it. "Why, it means just this, mates; it means that those wicked fellers aft have got to pay the penalty.

"Who killed Dago Fiddler, who drove 'im overboard? Why, Letcher, wasn't it? And Captain Creed? Why is Dago Fiddler 'aunting us, and driving us all half crazy? It's as plain as can be; he's 'aunting us because his murderers are still alive. Why are they alive, I ask you? Why, because the two swabs who were his best friends, and who should by rights turn the trick, haven't got the nerve for the job!"

It sounded reasonable to most of the crowd, for it was what we had thought from the beginning. So everybody murmured, "Aye" and looked hard at the two dagoes.

Dago the Greek smiled, and shook his head.

"It is not I who will interfere with Dago Feeddler's plans," says he. "And do you think the Feeddler ees not able to get even for 'eemself, in his own time? I tell you, I know he can blow up this ship and send all hands to the bottom, eef he like. I tell you, maybe Dago Feeddler has other men to get even with besides the skeepper and Meester Letcher."

"Aye, eet is so, by gar!" says Dago Portagee, looking straight at Jim Deems.

"I not like to be some mans I know on this packet, by yimminy!" sang out Yarkel from his bunk, for Jim Deems had been mean to him, too.

Well, this spilled the wind out o' Jim Deems' sails. My oath, he wilted like a paper collar in a rain-squall. For what Dago the Greek said sounded reasonable, and everybody looked hard at Deems and murmured, "Aye." It got on the old man's nerves so bad that he tumbled out of his bunk, and, with the Book under his arm for protection, went out on deck.

Quite a while afterward we were called out of our sleep by the sound of Jim Deems' voice. He had a high, cracked, old man's voice, but it could carry when he yelled, and he was yelling now.

When we looked outside we discovered the starboard watch staring open-mouthed, and Jim Deems kneeling upon the forehatch and praying as loud as he could. So we knew Jim Deems had religion, and had it bad; and from the fact that he prayed for his shipmates and not for himself we knew he considered himself in a state o' grace. It was just like a mean man like Jim Deems to take that attitude.

"My blinkin' heye, wot rotten luck!" says Liverpool. "As if a ghost wasn't enough, now we got to be shipmates with a 'Oly Joe!"

That night, and the next night, Dago Fiddler did not play. But he didn't leave us in peace. The haunt was with us.

I didn't see it, but others did. A black thing that lurked in the shadows. Dago Portagee saw it, and Irish Dick saw it, and Yarkel dreamed of fish-eyes, which, he says, was a bad sign.

Dago the Greek was on lookout during the morning hours, and he saw a ship without lights come sailing across our bows. She had a coffin-shaped hull, says the Greek, and was full-rigged, and she sailed with squared yards plumb against the wind. She sailed faster than any ship made by man ever sailed. His cry brought us to the rail, but she was already beyond sight.

AYE, there were plenty of marvels to keep alive our fears, and keep us secure in our loafing. For the *Meteor* was no longer a workhouse of the seas; and if she remained a hell-ship it was Dago Fiddler's fault, not the mates.

When Captain Creed became convinced the haunt was real, he shut himself up in his room and wrestled with the problem by

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getting drunk. When he did that, discipline practically ended upon the ship.

The mates were afraid of the dark, even as we were. By day, they kept us moving, but they spoke fair to us and gave us little to do. By night they kept to the poop; aye, they could not have been bribed to go for'ard.

It was just as well, for not one of us 'foremast hands could have been bribed or driven aloft after dark. We were in the trades, where sail-handling was hardly ever necessary; but if weather had come we would have seen the sticks ripped out of her before we set foot in the rigging in the nighttime.

The mate made just one effort to preserve the ship's routine, and when that ended in disaster he threw up his hands like the rest and let things slide. Since the skipper was drunk in his cabin, and likely to remain so as long as his stock lasted, the duty of sailing the ship was the mate's.

Now this night the port sidelight went out. The mate could see it was out, because there was no reflection upon the water. The watch could see it was out, too, from the waist, where we were gathered.

There was no lookout for'ard to attend to the lamp; we had stopped keeping lookout upon the fo'c'sle head; we kept it from the main deck, instead. After dark we shunned the fore part of the ship as if it were the abode of the black plague—for it was for'ard that the haunt was seen and heard. In the fair weather we slept upon the mainhatch, and even further aft; and when the weather became cold and sloppy we crawled into the sail-locker for our night sleep. Except the two dagoes, who had nothing to fear from Dago Fiddler, and Yarkel, who was at home with ghosts, the fo'c'sle was deserted by night.

Mr. Fitzgibbon would not go for'ard himself, but he was willing to send another man. He sang out from the poop that one of the watch should attend to the sidelight.

Not a man stirred. Aye, so changed was that ship in less than a week's time; Bully Fitzgibbon sang out an order, and we ignored it!

He swore at us, but he did not leave the poop. Instead he called to Mr. Letcher, who was keeping the watch with him, and ordered that poor, shaking swab to do the job. Mr. Letcher had to obey; he was an officer.

So Mr. Letcher came down the poop ladder and dragged himself for'ard. Dragged, is the word. He did not want to go for'ard beneath the shadow of the foresail; but go he must, and did.

We heard his boots upon the fo'c'sle-head ladder. We stared after him, breathless, listening. For this was the moment! Dago Fiddler's enemy was alone in the dark in Dago Fiddler's territory!

We expected something to happen. It did. My oath, yes! We heard Mr. Letcher shriek. My solemn word, it was a shriek to curdle the blood!

We heard some kind of a ghastly struggle going on there in the darkness. We heard a heavy fall. Then the third mate began to call for help.

But we were in no mood to go to the man's aid. Go within reach of that Thing for'ard! No, no; we were aft, as far as we could get, flattened against the cabin wall at the break of the poop, and what courage we had once owned we were now losing in the form of cold sweat.

We saw a long black thing wriggling on the deck, coming aft—and Irish Dick spoke of the Virgin, and others spoke of jumping overboard. Not until that black thing reached the mainhatch did we identify it with the calls for help; then we discovered it was Mr. Letcher dragging himself along upon his stomach. Boston Sam and I made a dash for it then, and picked him up. He had a broken leg.

We carried him into the cabin and laid him upon the cabin table. He was in a bad way; aye, that he was; he was near off his head with pain and terror. The captain came out of his room, and Mr. Buck came out of his berth, and the mate stuck his head into the companion hatch, and the cabin boy and Snowball, the cook, whimpered in the pantry, and all of us listened to the injured man's babbling.

He raved about the black man, about the tall thing without a face that came over the bows, all wet and dripping, and floated upon him. It picked him up and threw him off the foc's'le head, and the fall to the deck had broken his leg.

He had other marks upon him, a fine black eye, and bruises upon his throat. I wondered at them, but reflected that he could easily have hurt his eye, as well as his leg, in a twelve-foot fall, and in his great fright he might have choked himself.

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That is what the others thought, I guess, for no one doubted his yarn. We never thought of doubting it. On that ship we were long past doubting. I looked at the Old Man, and saw that he believed every word the third mate said.

Aye, Captain Creed was drunk, very drunk, full to the brim with hard liquor. But he was not fuddled. I guess he wished he could get fuddled and forget. For old Creed had the most unhappy face I ever looked upon. He was a man in torment if ever there were one.

Captain Creed finally drove Boston and me out of the cabin, where, of course, we had no business to linger. We told our mates what had happened to Mr. Letcher.

Then we stood about and listened to Mr. Letcher howl while the skipper and Bully Buck set his broken leg. After that we huddled together and listened to Dago Fiddler's music.

For this night Dago Fiddler played again. He played in the foretop as usual, and his tunes were gladsome jigs. It was plain Dago Fiddler was pleased with his night's work.

Next day Jim Deems got his first convert. By this time Jim Deems had stopped working, and was a Holy Joe for fair. He walked around with the Book in his hands and called upon any one who would listen to repent, repent, for the Kingdom was close aboard. He was in earnest, too, and a powerful arguer; aye, I've heard much weaker talk from frocked parsons in the missions ashore.

But we all wished Jim Deems would be quieter in his religion, for every man-jack of us was already repenting as hard as possible, and we felt that making so much noise about our sins wasn't going to help us win Dago Fiddler's forgiveness. So we shooed Jim Deems away from us, and he went outside the fo'c'sle crowd for an audience.

HE GOT hold of Snowball. Now that darky had ears for Jim Deems' talk; aye, the goings-on of the past week had been a sore trial to him.

He accepted Dago Fiddler's ghost as a warning to mend his ways. He had been in a state o' grace when a young man, but going to sea made him a backslider. Now, says he to Jim Deems, he was through with sin.

So he fell in a fit on the deck and rolled around, and we thought he was sick and would have doused him with buckets of water; but Jim Deems says no, to leave him alone, for he was wrestling with the devil. Sure enough, Snowball got up presently and shouted that he was washed clean and white.

Then he got up on the mainhatch and gave testimony. When he was finished he threw his rabbit's foot and dice overboard, and went into the galley and sang hymns; while Jim Deems took his place upon the hatch and urged the rest of us to do likewise.

We were powerfully impressed by all this. Several lads were willing to listen to Jim Deems now. But not Dago the Greek. Now he was a slick lad; in league with the devil, no doubt!

Dago the Greek went into the galley and had a talk with Snowball. He told Snowball that one reason Dago Fiddler haunted the ship was because he nearly starved to death on board her. He told Snowball that if he was going to prove his repentance he must stop robbing sailormen's stomachs to line the pockets of stingy owners. He made such a good talk that Snowball cried and promised to do better.

And he did do better. He broke out cabin stores, and cooked up such a feed as we could not remember having ever tasted in a ship's fo'c'sle. My eye, it was the first time since leaving London that we stopped feeling hungry!

Nor was it just one meal that proved Snowball's change of heart. From that day until we made port the hands lived like lords. We even stopped talking and thinking wishfully of the good things in the cargo.

So another week went by, with Dago Fiddler playing every night in the foretop and Jim Deems making converts every day. To get religion seemed safest on board a ghost ship. Every evening, before dark, Jim Deems held a revival meeting aft on the main deck. All hands who could walk attended.

The mates never interfered. They didn't sing on with Jim Deems, but they listened while he preached and read from the Book. Jim had become an expert on hell, and a man's blood would freeze while he described the fate of lads who didn't repent.

Aye, and Captain Creed knew of Jim Deem's work, and didn't interfere. A couple of times he came up and joined the mates on the poop, and listened to the sermon. Drunk as a lord he was, but steady on his pins.

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Since Mr. Letcher's accident we had not clapped eyes upon the black man who came over the bows. But we had no doubt he was about at night time, lurking in the dark places for'ard. We weren't going to investigate; my oath, no! We stayed aft, and because he had never come aft we got to believe that he never would.

But one night he called upon Captain Creed. Aye, and old Creed awakened all hands with his howls. Snowball, who had taken to sleeping in the cabin pantry of late, ran out on deck and told us that the skipper had seen a face, a wet, drowned face, staring in at him through the porthole of his room.

We peered into the cabin, through the alley-way—there was Captain Creed, the cold, cruel, wicked old man whom we had so feared, slumped in a chair in the saloon with his white head buried in his arms, sobbing aloud like a terrified child. My solemn oath, the sight and sound of that old man weeping frightened us as much as anything that had happened upon the ship!

Jim Deems took a look. He says the skipper needed food o' the spirit. He went into the cabin and shut the door. He wasn't kicked out again, and after waiting a long time we guessed Captain Creed had got religion.

He had. And not he alone. The two mates declared themselves repentant as well. The third mate had cast anchor at *Jim* Deems' feet the day after his leg was broken, but Buck and Fitzgibbon had been too proud to humble themselves before a common shell-back. Aye, they were the worst frightened men upon the ship, were the two buckos and Captain Creed; for they knew themselves to be the worst sinners on board, and the men most in need of mercy.

From that time on the *Meteor* was a gospel ship for fair. My eye! For the skipper took his religion the same way Jim Deems did. He took it hard, and he had to talk about it.

Work stopped almost altogether, and all hands spent hours, morning and evening, singing and praying and giving testimony, and listening to Jim Deems and Captain Creed preach.

Jim Deems was the real captain of the ship now; he lived aft, and ate with Creed and sipped Creed's rum; and Jim Deems wasn't going to let the rest of us forget for a moment our urgent need of heavenly protection. Nor was Captain Creed. All his life old Creed had been swearing at sailormen, and he was too old to change now. He used to swear at us for being lubbers; now he cursed us for being vile sinners in our secret hearts. But he, Abner Creed, had received his warning, and repented, and was saved.

"Amen," says Jim Deems.

So we were frightened by hell-fire in the daytime, and by Dago Fiddler in the nighttime, and all in all we were, I guess, the most miserable lot o' sailormen that ever sailed blue water. Except, perhaps, at mealtimes, when we sat down to that blessed cabin grub.

By the mercy o' Providence, we had the fairest of fair weather. The day we dropped the trades we picked up a breeze that carried us inside the Farallones. Lucky for us, my oath! If we had had a touch of foul weather, God knows what would have become of the ship! For Dago Fiddler played every night in the foretop, and that prevented us going aloft; and by day we were busy with our souls.

The pilot came on board, and sniffed, and took a look around, and wanted to know if we were a plague ship. Aye, never had that pilot seen a Yankee clipper make port in such a sorry condition—with dirty decks, and dirty paintwork, and slack and untarred rigging, and Irish pennants flying in all directions. Never had he seen such a crew, either—wild-eyed, haggard men, who sang hymns for chanteys when they laid hold of lines.

My word, that pilot was a puzzled man, and so was the doctor, who came on board as we towed down the bay. But the only plague on the ship was a plague of fear, and we could not be held up for that.

The tug shoved us into a berth that was waiting, but it was the dock-hands and the mates who tied up the ship. We of the crew were through with her; my flaming oath we were!

We left the canvas unfurled, slatting in the clewlines, and went over her rail, bag and box, the very moment the dock came within jumping-distance.

I fell in with a runner before I got off the dock. He was a nice-spoken fellow, and says he would show me the sights of San Francisco.

So he gave me a drink, and a hand with my duffel, and steered me into "Shanghai"

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Murphy's boarding-house, in Oregon Street; and the very next morning I woke up in the fo'c'sle of the ship *Yellow Jacket*, China bound.

WELL, about ten years later I was paid off from the barkentine *Joshua Snow*, in Boston, after a voyage out East. One day I went into the heart of the city, and lost my bearings in a maze of queer streets that seemed always to come back to the starting-point. So I wandered this way, and I wandered that way, and I turned a corner and ran plump into Dago Fiddler.

Aye, there he was right in front of me, a man who had been dead ten years, and whose ghost had been bragged about in fo'c'sles and boarding-houses all over the world. There he was, large as life; aye, twice as large as life. He was looking out of a big advertisement that was stuck on the front of a theater.

There was reading on the advertisement. It says, "Mr. Stanislaus Starkowsky (or some such foreign-sounding dago name) the World Famous Violinist, Will Give a Concert" or words to that effect, and a lot more about how wonderful he was.

My eye, it made me dizzy to look at that picture. I says to myself:

"This can't be real. You're dreaming, Barnaby, you're dreaming!"

People were going into the theater. So I went to the box office and bought a ticket. The man charged me five dollars, and I says—

"No, Barnaby, you're not dreaming!"

Inside, the place was filled with people. I didn't like their looks very much; mostly they were ladies in fine clothes, with here and there a lone man who like as not balanced a plug hat on his knee. It wasn't the sort of crowd I was used to chumming with.

It wasn't the kind of theater I was used to either; just a big hall with a stage at one end. A man was playing a piano on this stage when I entered; but he didn't look anything like Dago Fiddler. I thought I wasn't likely to get five dollars' worth of fun out of this show.

The fellow stopped playing the piano and went out, and everybody clapped but me. Pretty soon he came back and sat down on his stool and cleared decks for action.

But he didn't play. He waited. People began to clap, and all at once Dago Fiddler walked out upon the stage and bowed.

Well, my hair raised. I was expecting this, but it was a shock just the same. Oh, it was Dago Fiddler—or his double! The same walk, the same smile, the same face, only a little fatter.

He hugged his fiddle in the same way—like it was a pretty lass. He was dressed up most elegant in a waiter's suit, and he was happy-looking; otherwise he was like the *Meteor's* stowaway.

The program said he was going to play "The Song of the Sea-Wind, the Artist's Own Composition." That didn't mean anything to me until he put his fiddle to his chin. Then—my oath! For "The Song of the Sea-Wind" was Dago Fiddler's own tune, the tune he had picked out of the air when he was alive, the tune with which he had scared the wits half out us, after he died. Here he was alive again, fiddling it in Boston!

It was too much for me. It carried me back to those black, terror-ridden nights on board the old *Meteor*. It sounded too uncanny. I felt I needed air, and a drink, and a quiet place in which to think. So I got up out of my five-dollar seat and went into the street.

I stood in front of the building and tried to catch my breath again, so to speak. A fellow came out of a little alleyway and paused beside me. He began to roll a cigaret. I looked at his hands, because they seemed somehow to be familiar.

All at once I realized that the backs of his hands were tattooed with blue anchors. Looking him in the face, I recognized Dago Portagee. Aye, the same Dago Portagee, for all he was dressed in a fine suit and white collar.

Well, I just reached out and laid my hand upon his shoulder.

"Come, now, m'son, you just tell me about this queer business!" says I.

He jumped, and looked at me none too friendly.

"You know me," says I. "I'm Barnaby Baines, and you're Dago Portagee. We were shipmates and watchmates in the *Meteor*.

"We'll go have a wet, and then," says I, pointing to the picture on the front of the building, "you'll tell me how the dead came alive."

So he told me, over a couple of mugs of

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musty. (Oh, aye, this was in the days when such a thing was possible in Boston.)

I'll not give you his exact words because I forget them, and anyway his lingo was broken and he talked much with his hands and eyes. But this is the gist of what he said.

Dago the Greek planned it, and carried it out. Didn't I always say the Greek was a slick one?

The fiddle didn't go overboard. Dago Fiddler didn't go overboard. Both man and fiddle went into the lower forehold.

NOW Dago the Greek, says Dago Portagee, had helped load the *Meteor* in London, working as a stevedore. He knew the belly of that ship as he knew the back of his hand. He knew just how her cargo was stowed.

Particularly he knew of a way a man could get into the lower forehold from the lower forepeak. The stevedores in London had sawed a solid block out of the bulkhead separating the peak from the hold, and fitted it back again so it couldn't be noticed except through close inspection. They did this so they could get at the cargo in the night time, after the hatches were sealed. Aye, and it is likely the Greek bore a hand in this job himself.

Anyway, he was willing to turn his knowledge to good account. All during the voyage, says Dago Portagee, the Greek was slipping down into the hold in the night now and then, and helping himself to a bottle of wine or a can of preserves. Not that Dago Portagee knew about it from the first, indeed no, the Greek was much too wise to blab his secret. Broaching cargo is a serious business, and Dago the Greek planned to keep his knowledge and his actions to himself.

But he grew mortal fond of Dago Fiddler; and I guess he had a fondness, a sort of fellow-feeling, for Dago Portagee too. It's natural for dagoes to stick together when they are outnumbered in a fo'csle. So when the fiddle was ordered overboard and the Portagee threatened knife-play, Dago the Greek decided the time had come to share his secret. He had to save Dago Fiddler from grieving to death, and Dago Portagee from making a murdering fool of himself.

Now these London stevedores, in their stowing and thieving, had made a little open space in the cargo just abaft the foremast. It was a snug little room, says Dago Portagee, floored with boxes, walled with boxes, and securely roofed with huge hogsheads. A tunnel, large enough for a grown man to squirm through, connected this space with the hidden opening in the forepeak bulkhead.

In this little room the Greek hid the fiddle. He never thought of hiding Dago Fiddler himself down there—at least not then. But the lad had the secret of the place, and when he had a chance, in the night watches, he could slip into the hold and hug his beloved fiddle. He could not play it. Not yet.

This hiding-place in the cargo became Dago Fiddler's house of refuge. It contained the thing he loved most. So quite naturally when he ran for'ard that night, fleeing before the mate's wrath, he dived into the forepeak, squirmed into the hold and plugged the entrance behind him.

Quite naturally also the rest of us thought he had jumped overboard. Aye, even Dago Portagee thought for a little while the lad was gone to Davy Jones—until the Greek had slipped below and found out different.

Now Dago the Greek was at first much worried by the boy's hiding himself in this place. Dago Portagee said the Greek was always nervous about the hole in the cargo; he was afraid some mishap might discover it, and his connection with it, to the afterguard. That would mean —— for him on board, and quod for him ashore.

That is why he himself never considered the stowing away of the Fiddler. He was afraid of a grand search. When the Old Man did make a search, the Greek was "all water een 'is eensides," as Portagee put it, until the danger was past.

But when Dago Fiddler stowed himself away in the hold and all hands fore and aft accepted it as a fact that he had jumped overboard, Dago the Greek decided at once that the lad should stay in the hold. It was the safest way. If the lad came up now he would have to explain where he had been hidden. If he kept below he would be safe and comfortable, far more comfortable than he had ever been in the fo'csle. There were lashin's of the best food and drink within his arm's reach to be had for the taking with the aid of a sheath-knife and marlinspike, which the Greek provided. So Dago Fiddler stayed dead.

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It was no part of the Greek's plan to have the boy come back as a ghost. That, says Dago Portagee, was a lucky accident—and, oh, how he laughed when he mentioned it! The Fiddler had perhaps a sip too much of good wine the night we first heard the ghost music. Feeling so good, he broke out his fiddle and played. He played to himself, never dreaming we heard him on deck.

But his quarters were at the butt of the foremast. Now the main sticks of a ship are not just solid pieces of wood like, say, telegraph poles. My word, no. They are combinations of great pieces of wood all nicely fitted together. Such a mast can carry sounds.

The *Meteor's* foremast was a fine conductor for such sounds as a fiddle makes. When Dago Fiddler played in the hold, near the bottom of the foremast, we heard the notes in the foretop, which is at the top of the foremast. When once or twice he shifted his position and played for'ard of the mast, the music filtered up through the cargo and seemed to come from the forehatch.

When Dago the Greek saw how frightened all hands were of the ghost music he saw a chance to even up scores on board that ship. It was such a good chance he was willing to risk even a search, which if it took place wasn't likely to be successful. He saw how he and Portagee could get even with the fo'csle for looking down on them because they were dagoes, and with the afterguard for their hazing. The Fiddler could get even with all hands.

But the Fiddler, says Dago Portagee, never knew he was getting even. All he knew was that the Greek forbade him playing in the daytime, and permitted him to play in the night time. So he played in the night, and on deck we listened with our marrow freezing, thinking it was a haunt, and the two dagoes kept straight faces over the good laughs that were inside them. It was a great joke, says Dago Portagee.

Six weeks Dago Fiddler lay in the hold; six weeks of heaven for him and —— for us who might have treated him kindly but didn't. All he had to do was dine on the best of England, sleep when he wished and dream of his blessed "America" and play his fiddle when the Greek passed the word. He got so fat, says Dago Portagee, he could hardly squeeze through the bulkhead when the time came for him to come out, and he learned to see in the dark.

No, there was no trouble getting him off the ship. She was deserted and shunned, and after dark the Greek and Portagee came and got the boy, and the three of them walked ashore with never an eye observing them.

Now Dago the Greek was a slick one. He had been somebody maybe before he went to sea.

When he got Dago Fiddler ashore he did not take him into sailortown. He took him up into the city, where he found people who could talk the boy's lingo, and musicians who heard him play and became his friends.

He got Dago Fiddler the right kind of friends. Then he left him, and shipped out; for he was a born rover, was Dago the Greek, a blue-water man like myself, and not long in any port.

But Dago Portagee did not go to sea again. He had found his place in life. He loved Dago Fiddler; aye, he fair worshiped him. Why, his face would light up when he spoke of him.

He stayed ashore and served Dago Fiddler, stood between him and hardship; and he had grown fat and happy while the Fiddler fiddled himself famous. Famous he was.

"All over the world," says Dago Portagee.

So we had some more ale, and talked awhile of old ships and old times, and this and that. But one little point was still bothering me.

"LOOK here, Portagee," says I, "for ten years I have been a liar without knowing it, and the yarn I've spun as gospel has made me reputation. Aye, men have looked up to me because I sailed with Dago Fiddler's ghost.

"Well, you have explained away the music, and that's all right—I like a joke as well as the next man. But what of the ghost, Dago Portagee? What of the black man without a face who came over the bows and broke the third mate's leg and blacked his eye?"

My eye, I thought the lad would choke! My question caught him with a mouthful of beer, and it went down the wrong way when he laughed. And how he laughed! Aye, the black man was the cream o' the jest.

"It ees the Greek—that black man," says

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Dago Portagee. "Weeth a blanket around 'eem, weeth oakum and rope-yarn wet in the wash-deck tub for hair.

"Nicholas wait a long time to catch that —— t'ird mate. But he catch 'eem. He wait a long time to get even, but by and by 'e get even, eh?"

So I thought it over, and said yes.

AMERICA'S BARON MUNCHAUSEN

by **H. P.**

AMONG the settlers near the Natchez in 1725 was Le Page du Pratz. For many years fabulous stories of the Mississippi Valley and the Pacific coast had been spread broadcast in Europe. Strange races of white people were repeatedly being reported in different parts of the unknown new world. Le Page gave new zest to these yarns by publishing in Paris the story of a Yazoo Indian, Moncachtape, by name, which threw the makers of maps into confusion, for the geographers at their best were often compelled to use their imagination in filling in unexplored areas.

Le Page's account of the Indian's travels and discoveries won many believers, and even as late as the settlement of the Oregon question between England and the United States, was not entirely discredited. Quatrefages accepted it for face value in 1881. Hubert Howe Bancroft, the historian, found it plausible. Andrew McFarland Davis declared it to be fiction.

The story in brief was that of Moncachtape's story of his extensive travels in a desire to learn the origin of his people, the Yazoos. He traveled through the Chickasaw country, up the Ohio Valley, carried with the Iroquois and pressed on to live a spell with the Abnaki in the extreme northeast. There is enough in the narrative, as given by Le Page, to intimate strongly a knowledge of Niagara Falls and the high tides in the Bay of Fundy. Failing to find the homeland of his people in the East, Moncachtape went west. This time his course was northwest. He tells of the confluence of the Mississippi and the Missouri and of his trip up the latter to a village of the Missouri Indians. He mentions the Kansas tribe, also the Amikwa. The latter he designates as the Otters. This people took him over a height of land, and he found a river flowing west. Topographically he gives enough to identify various points on a modern map and to locate him well down the Columbia.

If he had quit at this point the yarn might be swallowed whole without any injury, but once on the Columbia and within a day's journey of the sea, he hears of a strange white people wearing beards and fully clothed, who come each year in ships to gather "yellow dye-wood." This wood, he claims, had a very disagreeable odor, yet was so much sought by the strangers that they deforested whole areas. No such wood is to be found on the Oregon coast, nor, as Winsor reminds, any tree which, if entirely eliminated, would deforest the country. These strangers, the Yazoo says, used guns and captured some of the natives, but up to the time of Moncachtape's arrival none of the strangers themselves had ever been captured either dead or alive.

The Yazoo, Moncachtapes, led an attack against them while they were chopping down the evil-smelling dye-wood trees, and killed eleven of them. Then follows a description of the dead whites, which marks the intruders as being Chinese or Japanese. They were small of stature, wore their hair long from the crown, wore clothing of soft material and many colors. Their feet were small and their leggings and shoes were in one piece.

Le Page himself had traveled extensively in the New World and was much given to speculating on the origin of the aborigines and the paths of their migrations. Of legitimate information there is nothing not encompassed in Le Page's own knowledge, either at first hand or by rumor.

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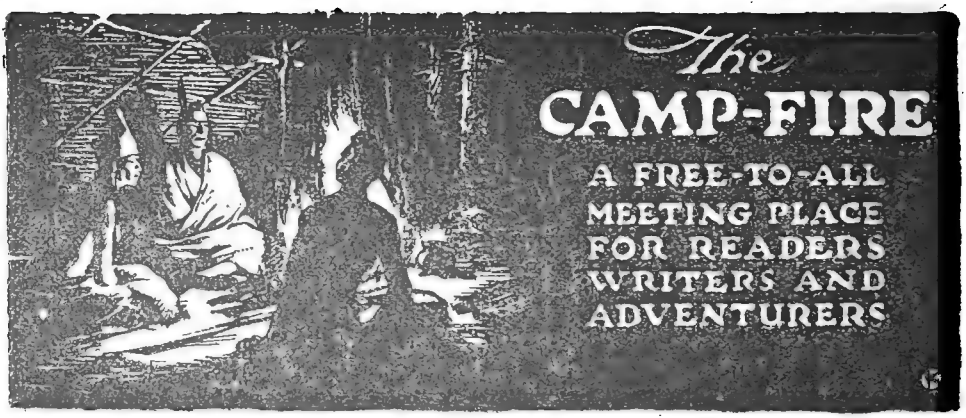

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

CONCERNING his novelette in this issue—and the series of which it is the second—Talbot Mundy gives us the following. As you know, he spent most of 1920 in Arabia and Palestine.

New York.

The chief difficulty about these *Jimgrim* stories has been to hide "Grim's" real identity. I believe he was the first American ever commissioned in the British Army without going through the farce of pretending to be a Canadian; he stuck out for his citizenship, and, as they wanted him badly, he had his way. Colonel Lawrence is probably the only man in the world who knows the Arab better than "Grim" does; he fought behind Lawrence all through that wonderful campaign on Allenby's right wing, doing the unseen, unsung spade-work. Now that the war is over they have kept "Grim" on the staff for what is known as "special duty," and he goes pretty well where he likes.

HIS methods are quite peculiar. He makes friends where he likes, in the jail or out of it; a man's crimes seem to make no difference to him; he isn't concerned about other folks' morals, but takes men and women as he finds them. And he possesses a perfect genius for stalling trouble by hunting for the high spots of human character. One favorite trick of his is to use small boys as spies—the smaller the better; sometimes they realize they are being so used, and oftener not.

"Under the Dome of the Rock" is founded almost wholly on fact, although various events have been run together to make a connected story. The Dome of the Rock—more commonly miscalled the Mosque of Omar—is the next most sacred place after Mecca and Medina in the Moslem world; and, being on the site of Solomon's and Herod's temples, it is equally sacred to Christian and Jew. In fact, few orthodox Jews will enter the precincts for fear of treading unaware on the spot (now unknown) where the ancient Holy of Holies stood.

Excavation under the Dome of the Rock is, of

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course, absolutely forbidden. Any attempt at it, if known, would be certain to stir fanaticism to its depths. But there was a German or Austrian (I am not sure which) who did contrive to excavate pretty much as told in the story; he was caught, the affair was hushed up, and "Grim" is one of the very few who know what lies under the Rock of Abraham.

THERE are dozens of places in Jerusalem that would answer to the description of Djemal's coffee shop.

Narayan Singh, like "Grim," is a personal friend of mine. He is one of those born soldiers who never get promoted, for the reason that about once in six months he takes an awful lot too much whisky, and, when primed, not even his beloved British colonel can make him behave. In between times he is one of those rare men whose friendship makes you stand straight. I never could draw a color line. I hate a mean white much more than I do the vilest negro, for it seems obvious to me that the mean white has had a chance to know better, whereas the negro hasn't. Of course, there is nothing negroish about a Sikh, but there are folk who object to them on racial grounds. Lacking that racial prejudice, I found it much less difficult than most men do to get on terms with "Grim," who, as I said, makes friends "wherever he darned well chooses." He sticks to his friends, too, and they stand by him, as will transpire in future stories.—TALBOT MUNDY.

SEVERAL readers have written in objecting strongly to anti-Catholic color in "Murkwood Spears," by Farnham Bishop and Arthur G. Brodeur, and one of them, finding the same thing in Arthur D. Howden Smith's "The Doom Trail," accuses us of deliberate anti-Catholic propaganda. As it happens, we have in the past been charged with anti-Protestant propaganda, also propaganda against all the following religions and nationalities—Jewish, Christian Science, Mohammedan, Swedes, English, Irish, Mexican, negro, German, etc. We did our little best against the Central Powers during the war and have no apologies to offer. The rest is poppycock. There is no propaganda in our fiction except for general cleanness, decency and manhood. If we have any propaganda to turn loose, we do it openly, as in "Looking Ahead for Democracy."

IN "MURKWOOD SPEARS," *Father Ambrose* was one of the villains. The objectors do not even claim any other ground of offense. Let me refer them to a story by Captain W. Robert Foran some years ago in which a Catholic priest was the hero (because of which some bigoted Protestant or Protestants accused us of being pro-Catholic). Also to various other stories in which members of the Catholic clergy have held places of honor.

Father Ambrose, of course, would have been instantly unfrocked and given the extreme of punishment by his superiors in the church if, in those lawless, turbulent times, word of his doings had reached them from his almost isolated district.

The real point is that to make an individual a villain in fiction is not to make villains of his entire sect or nation. If it were, *it would be impossible to have any villains in fiction* without giving offense.

Think that over, any of you who are narrow-minded enough to kick if *your* religion or *your* nationality happens to be the same as that of a villain in a story, but enter no complaint at all if the villain's religion or nationality happens to be the other fellow's.

AS TO nationality, we in the office long since arrived at the conclusion that the only comparatively safe thing to do was to make all fiction villains Americans. As to religions for villains, there isn't any choice. Any religion assigned to him will raise a protest from some followers of that religion. Luckily, most villains don't have much religion of any kind. Incidentally, a novelette we expect to publish early in 1922 will probably elicit a howl of rage from some representatives of a Protestant sect because they'll be unable to grasp the full breadth of the story's meaning and will think it is an attack on their belief. As a matter of fact, I can't remember now just which sect it is. At least we'll not at that time be charged with being anti-Catholic.

To one sentence the objection is sound—"something coldly evil . . . . that suited the black gown he wore"—if the black gown is considered, as it could be, as the emblem of the Benedictines. When I read it (and doubtless when the author wrote it) the thought was only of its black color, thus making an entirely innocent meaning. If I had caught the other possible meaning I'd have changed the sentence. (Incidentally, while a Protestant, it happens I've a warm feeling for the Benedictines in return for kindness received.)

AS TO "The Doom Trail." Complaint is based on two passages, lines 24 to 42, page 111, and lines 12 to 20, page 115, both of our August 18th issue. In the first passage the English governor says the

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ambition of *Black Robe*, a Jesuit priest, is to make France supreme in the New World and to "extend the influence of the Pope by making his religion universal" there. Complainant says "Smith's argument is absurd" and praises the Jesuits' work in converting the Indians, adding a whack at Protestant missionaries of the time. Maybe I'm dull, but I can't see anything shameful in that very natural and, as I understand it, universally accepted ambition. Also, it isn't given as "Smith's argument," but as that of one of the characters in his story. There is a world of difference. Also this ambition is credited to *Black Robe* alone, not to Catholics or even Jesuits in general. I'd call the complainant's argument one of the weakest I've ever met. Same old trouble of trying to make one slurred individual into a slurred religion or nationality.

On page 115 an Indian says "They (the French) try by most subtle means to convert us to their religion, which is not any better than our own." By this, says complainant, "Smith is trying to convey that the Catholic religion is devil or demon worship." Poppycock on the face of it, but he probably refers to entirely different parts of the story in which *Black Robe* is, I think, a party to various trickeries and sins practised on the Indians.

If you have an August 18th copy, look up these references. I haven't quoted in full, but see whether I haven't given the essentials and whether you can find just ground for complaint.

AS TO barring out stories in which a Catholic happens to be a villain, or in which a Protestant, a Hebrew or member of any religion, layman or minister, rabbi, priest, mullah, or anything else happens to be a villain, naturally we'll do nothing of the sort. Same as to nationalities. If we did, we'd have to play fair, bar all alike and have no villains in our stories. We certainly are not going to discriminate in favor of Catholics or any other religion. Right there lies the whole secret of the matter. The complainers of each religious belief ask only that you don't make a villain out of any believers in *their* religion. Never yet has any one complained because any of our stories happened to pick *another fellow's* religion or nationality for a villain. There's fair play, justice, unselfishness and breadth of view for you!

This magazine tries not to give needless offense to any creed, nationality, party or class in its fiction, but it has played no favorites and it is not going to. The villains in our stories will continue to belong to whatever nationality, religion, etc., seems best to fit the needs of the particular story, and those who don't like that kind of impartiality can—but I'm supposed not to cuss at Camp-Fire. If the members of any religion are so bigoted and so blind to fact and history as to maintain that no priest, minister, rabbi, practitioner, mullah, or whatever it is, has been a villain, I take exception in advance. Every religion, race, etc., has, has had and will have its black sheep. If fiction has any need of such a case, fiction has a perfect right to use it. And it's blamed well going to exercise that right in this magazine.

I respect any man's religious belief, from devil-worship on up, provided he is wholly sincere in it. For all I know, it may be best for his particular case. We try to avoid offense to any of them, but we don't try to avoid the kind of offense that a man has to walk around three sides of a block to get. And if there's any propaganda floating around in this matter, it is being sent out by the zealous protestors of these various faiths, not by this magazine.

SOME time ago W. Townend wrote me of an unexpected meeting with a long-lost acquaintance in a strange place and wondered whether many other comrades couldn't furnish interesting cases of this kind. Surely they can. How about having some of them?

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, Thomas F. Barnett rises and introduces himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine. But he might have told us what happened to the monument.

MY past has been somewhat prosaic, to say the least, when compared to most of the bunch gathered around Camp-Fire.

I was born—to begin at the beginning—some twenty-six years ago on a high hill down in Tennessee. I was unsuccessfully exposed to education in the public schools of Memphis, where I spent my boyhood. It was here that I got my first sniff of printer's ink—on the *News-Scimitar*—and it seems to this day that I've never been able to get entirely away from it in spite of the multitude of jobs I have held since.

I served three years in the United States Navy, enlisting in October, 1916, as a "Landsman-for-

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Kind-Treatment." After receiving the aforesaid kind treatment at the Naval Training Station at Newport, Rhode Island, I was assigned to duty on (not *in*) the Naval Prison in Brooklyn. Was later sent to the U. S. S. *Mercury* (transport) where I served for a year, running between New York and France. I was—gosh, it's hard to keep the "I's" out of a letter of this sort—in July, 1918, I was transferred to the U. S. S. *Lake Worth*, engaged in hauling mines from Norfolk to Scotland.

The *Lake Worth* furnished most of the material for my story. The characters are composites of the crew. The dates and places named are all history—with the exception of the main incident. And as Tut said about lambasting a lion with a piece of two-by-four—"Has anybody ever tried it?"

I would be tickled pink to hear from any of my old shipmates who may chance to read this, especially Rog. And if this fair page ever attracts the wandering eye of that labor-abominating, brass-pounding old side-kick of mine—that partner-in-crime of *"l'escapade du Monument des Girondins,"* I'd take it as a downright favor of him to sit down and write me a regular letter.

With best wishes to "Camp-Fire" and all the gang gathered around it—THOMAS F. BARNETT.

HERE is a Camp-Fire Station with an address easy to find, with exceptional advantages as a gathering-place and with its full share of the right spirit of hospitality and good-comradeship:

Chicago, Illinois.

Change, if you will, the address of the Camp-Fire Station under my supervision to that of H Company, First Infantry, Illinois National Guard—armory at Sixteenth Street and Michigan Avenue, Chicago.

Note, too, that on Wednesday nights, from eight to twelve o'clock, all are welcome to squat around their own particular camp-fire in H Company room. We haven't got much in the way of amusements yet—a bowling-alley, billiard room, library, canteen and cafeteria are on the way—but strangers are welcome, and the only password needed is "The Camp-Fire—H Company."

Mail addressed "care of H Company Camp-Fire" will be held by the armory custodian and delivered promptly upon proper identification. Registered mail excepted. No federal entanglements desired, so we'll just keep out.

Howsomever, here's hoping we get a regular crowd together some Wednesday evening, and hop to it. Lots of easy chairs to rest in, a couple of couches—what more's necessary to start off an evening of reminiscences? Let's go!—JOHN BRADFORD MAIN.

A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin-board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club or resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

The only connection between a Station and this magazine is that stated above, and a Keeper is in no other way responsible to this magazine nor representative of it.

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No. 12— Seattle. H. C. Copeland, *The Western Sportsman*, 83 Columbia St.
No. 61— Burlington. Judge B. N. Alberson, Fairhaven Ave.
No. 83— Seattle. Chas. D. Raymer, Raymer's Old Book Store, 1330 First Avenue.
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No. 5—Milwaukee. Paul A. Buerger, Apt 2, 150 Biddle Street.
No. 72—Kenosha Leland Birchard, 304 Marion Ave.

WHEN Lee Hooper of our writers' brigade dropped into the office the other day between jumps around the western hemisphere he told me about seeing the bull-and-tiger fight that figured in one of our stories and has already been testified to by another comrade after some doubting Thomas had hooted at the idea of any such thing having happened. I asked him to tell the rest of you too, and he has.

I agree with Mr. Hooper as to bull-fights not being the American idea of sport. Like him, I've seen one, only one. I remember that, during a happy moment when there seemed a very real chance of the bull's "getting" a picador, I found myself standing on a seat loudly imploring the bull to kill him. I may even have cussed a wee bit. (I was very young then!) The fact that the picador was pinned down under his horse only made his demise the more desirable and fitting. The unfairness to the bull is bad enough, but the unfairness to the miserable horses driven blindfold to an often intentional and unnecessary disemboweling—well, as Mr. Hooper says, it's not an American's idea of sport.

New York City.

As a supplementary, if entirely unnecessary corroboration of the bull-and-tiger fight in Panama City some years ago, about which there has been some question raised in Camp-Fire, I would like to say that I personally witnessed this fight, if such it can be called when both bull and tiger declined to fight, and can readily recall an amusing incident that occurred on this occasion which is probably known to many others who read Camp-Fire.

WHEN the tiger finally jumped the fence that encircled the bull-ring he caused a veritable panic among a number of small boys—native Panamanians—who were peeping through cracks in the fence near the spot selected by the tiger for his escape. The *muchachos*, with wild screams, scampered away toward the nearest tree, already burdened with its ultimate capacity of small boys who were using it for a grandstand. The tiger, trotting along at a leisurely pace, reached the tree at the

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moment of its failure and in time to welcome a small mob of youngsters who fell almost at his feet. The effect can better be imagined than described. I have never been able to decide which was the more startled, the boys or the tiger.

Bull-fighting is too cruel a pastime ever to become popular with Americans or Englishmen, or with any people who love clean sport. The affairs are entirely too one-sided. I noticed a significant thing at this, the only bull-fight I ever saw, though I had many opportunities. When the matador made a skilful stroke the Panamanians cheered; when the tortured animal retaliated, only too infrequently, the Americans applauded the bull. I do not remember that the Spanish populace especially liked this.—LEE HOOPER.

IN ACCORDANCE with Camp-Fire custom, Ray McGillivray rises and introduces himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine. I'll say that at least mail addressed to the name he signs to his letter gets a reply from said name. That's how we got this letter:

Citronelle, Alabama.

To prospective friends of the Camp-Fire, whom I have known silently for a long time, I may appear as:

SIX feet two, 190 pounds, a trifle thin of hair, boned like a lumberjack, and wearing anything from parka to cotton unie which temperature (and pocketbook) demand. Have tried every outdoor sport from polo to duck-on-rock, and have the following mediocre performances as my records:

Track—2 miles in 10:18.
Crew—No. 3 oar for two years.
Football—Varsity guard.
Baseball—Semi-pro first base.
Traps—88 out of 100.
Golf—Beverly C. C. in 81, Minnekahda in 82.
Boxing—K O'd too many times (by opponents) to give particulars.
Tennis—Semi-finalist, San Diego championship.
Billiards—Spotted 15 in 50 (three-cushions) by Augie Kieckefer.
Other Sports—Earnest beginner.

Have gambled at most of the notorious lay-outs on two continents. Know to some extent every card-game from bezique to red dog. Have tasted most brands of the bad liquor in the world from Mississippi shinny (boiled in an ex-refuse-can and condensed through an ex-garden-hose); to Kakar âtanhlui, which makes the natives crazy and (in quantity) kills any white man, to British Columbia vanilla extract.

HAVE tried many varieties of work, but liked all so well I couldn't stay long at one. Have been bartender, sub-editor, intelligence officer, trade spy, chauffeur, stoker on a coast trader, supe for a hypnotist, section hand (C. N. R.) and sub-division salesman.

Have been in turn Presbyterian, Atheist (sophomore), Unitarian, Christian Scientist and Adventist. Considering now starting a cult of my own (notice later).

Have run gasoline launches in three oceans and two of the Great Lakes. Owned three cars, Overland, Marmon, Chandler. Now have Studebaker. Have driven 4,300 miles in a single trip. Starting in May for Hickory-Nut Gap, Bretton Woods and points west, with the other three corners of a contract bridge-game as company.

ADVENTURE? Yes, indeed! Closest call I've ever had was when I went in after a woman bather off Longport (near Atlantic City, N. J.), and was drowned to a point where even the pulmotor got disgusted at attempts to save me.

I have used more names than any other peaceable, law-abiding individuals I have met. In the beginning I inherited a jaw-breaker from my Scandinavian parent. It had twenty-eight letters and a pair of hyphens. So, first I used a Weiss knife, and then, finding what I had left of a handle was only a suffix in the mother tongue, discarded that. Since then I have had no less than four engraved plates made, none of which bore the name at the end of this letter. I shall keep this, however, shifting back to an alias when circumstances make another identity seem advisable. So that is why I dare furnish the foregoing pocket-edition Benvenuto Cellini; if it brings an evangelist on my trail I'll simply shift to—but telling would crab the deal, wouldn't it?—RAY MCGILLIVRAY.

HERE'S a bit copied from a letter—and the letter is not attached and I don't remember which one of you wrote it. How about these "westerly" winds?

Regarding "westerly" winds coming from the east.

Many a time I have heard "westerly" used to denote a wind from the east. I heard it the first time at a school for seamanship. Ocean drift is considered the same way. Weather Bureau man here informs me that "westerly" to designate wind from fast is O. K., though bureau generally calls wind from east an east wind, etc. Hourigan's "Complete Nautical Instructor" and Edmunson's "Elements of Navigation" speak of "westerly" wind as from east, though not invariably.

Encyclopedia gives "westerly" wind from west. Webster's Unabridged gives: Westerly: *a*, 1, being *toward* the west; 2, moving from westward. *Adv.*, tending, going, or moving, toward the west.

Seems to be some conflict. Let's substitute "westward" for "westerly." There is no doubt as to the exact meaning of "westward."

BE MARKING down your favorite stories as you go along in preparation for our annual vote by readers on the best fiction published in *Adventure* during the year. Send in your list after the December 30th issue has been published. This is your chance to get the sort of stories you want in the magazine.—A. S. H.

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VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

These services of *Adventure* are free to any one. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you **read and observe the simple rules**, thus saving needless delay and trouble for us. The whole spirit of the magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help we're ready and willing to try. **Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.**

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you, *post-paid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of the last issue of each month.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 109 Mountfort St., Boston, Mass., can supply Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL SELL: March, 1917 to July, 1921; in good, clean perfect-paged condition, at five cents per copy. Purchaser pays shipping charges. Not less than one year's issue sold, and prefer to sell as a whole.—Address B. C. ELDER, P. O. Box 257, San Francisco, Cal.

WILL SELL: Dec., 1916 to date, for ten cents each.—THOM. CASEY, Waverly, Minn.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Camp-Fire Stations

In their homes or shops some members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to—maintain Stations where wanderers may call and receive such hospitality as the Keeper wishes to offer. The only requirements are that the Station display the regular sign, provide a box for mail to be called for and keep the regular register book. Otherwise Keepers run their Stations to suit themselves and are not responsible to this magazine or representative of it. List of Stations and further details are published in the Camp-Fire in the first issue of each month.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Addresses

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

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AFRICA

THE VAST AND SAVAGE

by

William Ashley Anderson

ALTHOUGH it can no longer be called the land of mystery—since generations before us have already cracked its shell—Africa will remain for many years to come the greatest of all places of adventure, because it offers all things to all men.

Within the borders of its unbroken vastness all South America could be tucked with room left for most of Europe. An area as great as Pennsylvania could be lifted from its deserts with no apparent shrinkage. Ireland could literally be lost within its jungles.

The fact that a regular route can be followed by train, bus and boat, from Mombasa, on the East Coast, to the mouth of the Congo, on the West Coast; and that the Cape to Cairo route can be traversed without any real danger, means little. There is always trouble off the beaten trail.

In 1916 the greatest hand-to-hand battle of modern times was fought in the highlands of Abyssinia between the ancient Ethiopian Christians of Shoa and rebellious Mohammedans; and the outside world heard little of it. Spanish forces of over twenty thousand, in July and August, were on a serious defensive in Morocco, and a large column was annihilated. Also in July, within a short distance of Cape Town—the oldest permanent European colony on the continent—fanatic Zulus are reported to have attacked over seven hundred mounted police who were ordered to expel them from forbidden territory, and in the resulting mêlée several hundred natives were killed.

These events had absolutely no connection with the war in German East Africa, during which probably three hundred thousand lives were lost.

Their significance lies chiefly in the fact that none had any bearing upon another; that the scenes were separated by thousands of miles; and that the Africans involved were of more distinctly different races than the Alaskan Eskimo and New York Jew. If Africa overlapped the United States, and Abyssinia were placed upon New York, the relative position of the coast of Morocco would be a thousand miles out in the Pacific; and Cape Town would be somewhere near Peru.

IN AFRICA was the cradle of civilization (Egypt); yet in no other land is there savagery of so low a grade as exists there today. The Akka dwarfs, for instance, are representative of the lowest type of human being known, with such marked differences from the normal that they seem more like gnomes or kindred of the apes than men of our kind.

To understand something of the natives and the amazing diversity between northern and southern types it is necessary to know something of the physical character of the continent.

Roughly Africa is divisible into two parts: the great upper oval extending from the west to the east where it is somewhat crushed in by the Red Sea, so that it terminates in the great pointed Horn of Africa jutting out into the Indian Ocean; and the bulky triangular limb that forms the southern division. The continent is about 5,000 miles in length, from north to south; and 4,500 in width, from east to west. A stem, ninety miles wide, (scratched by the Suez Canal) connects it with Asia; and its northwest point is separated from Spain by only nine miles of open water.

The full sweeping coast line of the entire continent is almost unbroken by bays or indentations, and in many places the desert runs down to the sea. Aside from Madagascar and its satellites there are few islands worth mentioning, except rich and beautiful Zanzibar and Pemba off the East Coast; hot and rugged Socotra off the Horn of Africa; and the volcanic islands of the Atlantic which have long been colonized by the Spanish and Portuguese.

Topographically Africa is as peculiar as its people. It is generally of plateau character raised in steps which in the southern and eastern parts bring it up to a level of about four thousand feet, with a gradual tilt to the northwestward. Along the fringes of the plateaus are occasional mountain ranges or great isolated mountain peaks such as Kilima Njaro, which rises in a symmetrical mass to a height of almost twenty thousand feet—so that while you are parching on the Masai Steppe you may be looking at its perpetual glaciers gleaming under the torrid sun.

The northern and southern divisions of the continent are distinctly different, though the features

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that characterize the southern extend upward through the eastern borders of the northern division.

The southern is marked by broken ridges which attain great heights and are scattered along the edges of the most remarkable topographical feature of Africa. This extraordinary feature is a rift—the scar of a wound that ripped Africa open from end to end. The floor of this rift is now elevated, and its depressions are filled with great lakes such as Nyassa, Tanganyika and Rudolf, even to the Red Sea (for the rift extends to Palestine, where it forms the Dead Sea).

The great Victoria Nyanza in central Africa is a "shallow" lake spread out between two rifts.

Along the East Coast are clean virgin forests of great trees around the mountains; and broad intervals of scrub-thorn, *veld* (prairie and bush), desert, and salt basins, and along the few small rivers near the coast, wet banana country.

On the West Coast, or Congo side (the basin of this river equals that of the Mississippi), it is wet, dark, thickly jungled, and interlaced with many streams and broad rivers. It is somewhat like the Amazon country, except that at the coast the river breaks through a barrier of hills.

South Africa, with its several fine rivers, tremendous waterfalls, high plateaus, and great isolated desert country, combines something of both the East and West Coasts.

The northern portion of the continent embraces two principal areas: the great desert of Sahara, almost as large as the entire United States; and the Sudan, south of the Sahara, stretching across the equatorial regions from the upper Nile almost to the Atlantic (north of the Congo basin), and including the drainage basins of the Niger River and the great fresh water Lake Chad, which has no outlet. The basin of this lake varies from arid desert to forest and swamp.

The West Coast of the north is some what like that of the Congo country, except that it gradually flattens from hill and swamp into flat plain and desert as it sweeps farther north.

The Sahara is a rough arid belt extending from the Red Sea to the Atlantic, lined by only one strip of verdure—the Nile basin, the only river in all this vast region. There are oases scattered in the desert, and low, broken mountains, and dry water-courses. On the north the desert is fringed by the Atlas mountains which slope sharply down to the Mediterranean Sea, making a coastline similar in many characteristics to that of European countries.

AFRICA, presenting the vastest unbroken areas of dry land surface on earth, has also the most uniform of climates. Cut in two almost at its medial line by the equator, it possesses the largest of all equatorial regions. Besides, the zone of greatest heat is north of the equator in the desert region, where the mean average Summer temperature is almost blood heat. In the southern hemisphere there are also great deserts—particularly the Kalahari, between the Orange and the Zambesi Rivers, where very high temperatures prevail.

It follows, therefore, that the average temperature of the whole continent is extraordinarily high, though there are seasonal changes north and south, and in the desert regions the nights are often cold. Contrary to the popular idea, the humid West Coast is not as hot as the East Coast.

Trade winds under different names recur regularly, and rainy seasons in the torrid zones are well defined. In equatorial Africa the rainfall is tremendous, the greatest precipitation occurring in Spring and Fall, though there are occasional rains at other seasons.

In the Kameruns, on the West Coast, there is a record of over 350 inches of rainfall in a year, which compares remarkably with the 62 inches in Alabama, the maximum annual rainfall in the United States. In the temperate zones there is usually only one rainy season, and this is affected by local conditions, such as mountains, deserts, etc.

As a result of its broad land areas, its unbroken heat, and its invariable rainfall, Africa is rich in varied vegetation. The desert regions are somewhat like those of North America, except that in place of cactuses there are thorny and fleshy euphorbias and acacias, with date palms in the desert oases.

But as the arid deserts yield gradually to regions of rainfall the character of the country changes to steppe and prairie (the *veld*), which in turn yield, as they approach wet or equatorial regions to lands of savannas and great forests. In these forests the trees often attain enormous proportions, so that beneath the top roof of the forest, there is sometimes a second and even a third roof.

The vegetation of the southern zones differs from that of the northern. It is particularly varied and characterized by the most brilliant flowering plants.

In Cape Colony, in their season, violets and calla-lilies literally carpet the fields. It is a land, too, of grapes and honey. In Zanzibar, off the East Coast, tropical fruits litter the lanes, and pineapples grow as weeds. In the mountains of East Africa the great forest trees go up to heights over two hundred feet, and the papyrus grows so thickly in the swamps that causeways can be made for troops by simply bending the reeds down and binding them together. But at the same time there are many places in the deserts and along the coasts where not a spear of grass can grow.

IN AFRICA there is, consequently, a great diversity of creatures. The land is open to range for thousands of miles in all directions. Hoofed animals predominate; and I have seen antelope passing in such large numbers that it seemed as if the plain were undulating. While there are no true native oxen, the buffalo is fairly numerous, and very dangerous. The horse is represented by the zebra, the quagga, and the wild ass, which, particularly the first, are still to be seen in great numbers.

A distinctive characteristic of African fauna is the tremendous size of many species, notably the elephant, giraffe, rhino, hippo, buffalo, and eland, all of which are still numerous.

Except in the Atlas Mountains along the Mediterranean shore, which has more in common with Europe than Africa, there are no species of many wild animals common outside Africa—no true oxen, camels, sheep, goats, deer, wolves, bears, foxes, tiger—

On the other hand there are many species of wild animals peculiar to Africa alone.

The continent is the habitat of a great diversity of predatory beasts and venomous reptiles—such as the lion, which sometimes hunts in packs; hyena, often bold and dangerous, often a simple nuisance;

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leopard, a wanton murderer; wild dog, silent, swift, and always dangerous in packs; crocodiles swarming in the creeks; and a large proportion of venomous snakes, some of which are aggressive, notably the black mamba, "the snake which walks on its tail," probably the most dangerous and most dreaded of all snakes.

Strangely enough, of the four most dangerous animals of Africa, three are not carnivorous. In point of danger, some of the hunting tribes of East and South Africa rate wild beasts as follows: lion, buffalo, rhino, elephant. The greatest danger from the lion is in his uncertainty. He may be a whimpering coward—or a slashing demon. The buffalo may attack on sight or scent. The half-blind rhino will charge up wind at any objectionable scent. The elephant, unless *amok*—when the herd disowns him—will not as a rule attack except in self-defense.

THE racial history of Africa also sets it apart as unique among the continents of the world. Everywhere else the progress of man may be followed step by step from the time he sidled out of a cave with a piece of sharp-edged obsidian in his hand and proceeded to subjugate the wild beasts or drive them before him. In Africa the aboriginal does not seem to have advanced; he still trembles at the shadows. Here the ape reaches his highest point of development in the gorilla and chimpanzee, and man, in the form of pygmies who have no known language of their own, has remained at the lowest point.

There are perhaps 200,000,000 people on the continent of Africa. These are made up exclusively of the white and black races, with a variety of types produced by the intermingling of the two.

The whites inhabit the north, and the blacks the south, while the Soudan and central Africa are streaked with intermixtures.

The branches of the white race represented are the Semite and the Hamite in an overwhelming proportion; though along the Atlas Range on the Mediterranean shore there have been succeeding incursions of Hamites, Semites from Phenicia, Romans, Germanic Vandals, Arabs, and negroes infiltrating from the south.

Hamites are popularly believed to be negroes, which is quite wrong. So far as they can be traced the Hamites came originally from southern Arabia into northeastern Africa. Of this stock was the Queen of Sheba, of Solomon's time, and the Abyssinians (Ethiopians), Somalis, Gallas, Masai (with varying intermixtures of Semitic and negro blood) of the present day. The ancient Egyptians are also believed to have been derived from this stock.

Where the large African negroes came from, no one can yet tell, though it is significant that in the prehistoric remains in the caves of southern Europe negro types have been identified. These large African negroes speak various dialects of the same root language, which is known as the Bantu, and this name has therefore been applied as a generic title. It roughly distinguishes the large type of African negro from the Bushman, or pygmy type.

The pygmies are probably the aboriginal inhabitants of Africa. While the pygmies represent the smallest of human beings, many of the Bantu negroes represent the largest physical types known.

These little people are not in the same class as the Bantu people, who are on a plane very far above them. They are less than four and a half feet in height, with faces that are not of the Bantu type.

They have bulging foreheads, noses with depressed bridges, spreading nostrils, lips long and thin, skin covered with fine downy hair, bearded, naked in their primitive state, with no community life nor known common language.

On the other hand, many of the Zulu tribes (Bantus), and the Somalis, the Wolofs, and the Fulahs (mixed Bantu and Hamite or Semite) are larger than the renowned Sikhs of India, averaging over six feet in height and being possessed of great strength and extraordinary endurance.

The intellectual capacity of many of these people is also comparable with our own, though it does not seem to have been exercised, in the case of the savage tribes, beyond that of a white boy, except in woodcraft and warfare.

The general trend of racial movements, of which no authentic record has yet been made, seems to be that the black Bantus forced the black pygmy people farther south on to the fringes of the deserts or deeper into the jungles, where they remain to this day, shy, elusive, silent, but desperately courageous —only occasionally making friends with the larger people.

The Bantus themselves were in turn forced south and west by the extension of the people of ancient Egypt (Hamites) and the Semites.

The purest examples of the migrating Bantus seems, therefore, to be in the tribes farthest south—the Zulus or Kaffirs—who have reached the highest point of development of the native African.

Having attained this high development in the south, where they reached the end of the continent, the tide of their migration seems to have recoiled northward again. In this northward movement the pure-blooded Bantus encountered the mixed negro-Hamitic-Semitic tribes that were milling about central Africa, or still lunging southward.

This was the status of the inhabitants of Africa when the white people of Europe began to become interested in the continent, and the slave trade made it a place of growing importance to merchants, explorers, and adventurers.

WITHOUT taking into consideration the history of North Africa, which is pretty thoroughly recorded in books, it may be said that the opening of Africa commenced in the fifteenth century.

Prince Henry of Portugal began it by sending expeditions sailing down the West Coast.

The circumnavigation of the continent had been previously accomplished, by the way, by Phenicians 600 years B.C., according to Herodotus. The Arabs are believed to have mined for gold in the basin of the Zambesi. Somaliland was visited by expeditions from Egypt. The East Coast was visited by Persians and even Chinese.

The first voyage of marked importance to our own age and people was in 1484 when Diego Cam passed the Congo, and returned with reports of a Christian monarch in the heart of Africa—who was supposed to be Prester John in Abyssinia. This was a tremendous stimulus to

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exploration. Bartholomeu Dias touched the Cape in 1487—five years before Columbus discovered America. Ten years later Vasco Da Gama rounded the Cape, and made clear sailing for modern navigators.

The first of the modern explorers to attain distinction was the Scotchman, James Bruce, who discovered the headwaters of the Blue Nile after a successful expedition to visit the Negus of Abyssinia, commencing from the Red Sea coast in what is now Italian Somaliland. Mungo Park, another Scotchman, then undertook exploration along the Niger in the western Sudan. These expeditions were being carried on about the time of the American Revolution, when our own pioneers were fighting for the possession of the Ohio River.

Portuguese explorers at the same time were penetrating the continent in the south.

Then commenced a series of explorations—every one of which is an epic of romantic adventure.

The names of Livingstone and Stanley stand out in popular knowledge of these early explorers, though there were a score of others—like Speke, Burton, Johnson, Tippoo Tib, Emin Pasha, Gordon, Chaillu—of almost equal importance.

David Livingstone was a Scotchman, and a missionary. He went out first to Bechuanaland, now in South Africa, in 1840, ten years before our war with Mexico. Thirty-one years later, Henry M. Stanley, an American newspaper man, and a veteran of the Civil War, though born in Wales, met him on the shores of Lake Tanganyika in the heart of unknown Africa, where Livingstone had come to a halt while on his third expedition into the interior. No word had been heard from him for a couple of years, and Stanley had been sent out by James Gordon Bennett of the New York *Herald* to discover him.

Livingstone's explorations practically lifted the veil from Africa. When he died a few years later in the interior, Stanley set out again to continue his work. Stanley's last great task was to locate Emin Pasha, the Governor of the Equatorial Provinces of the Egyptian Sudan, who had been cut off from civilization by the rising of the Mahdi and the massacre of General Gordon at Khartum; and this he succeeded in doing, though Emin at first declined to be relieved.

Livingstone and Stanley separately crossed and recrossed the continent several times, discovering and tracing the courses of the rivers Zambesi and Congo and the great lakes of central Africa. Nevertheless, in the course of their explorations they found others before them, principally Arabs in the slave trade. For all adventurers are not writers of acceptable English!

The Black Continent, vast, mysterious, alternately gloomy and shot with flame, threatening the most terrible dangers the human mind can imagine, teeming with strange and fearful forms, shadowed by traditions of nameless fear—afforded a temptation brave men could not resist.

Upon our own continent the pioneers were scouts who advanced before a flood of civilization. The force of progress was behind them. In the Sudan and equatorial Africa, this was not so. The explorers went out alone, to see and conquer—and there were no forts of refuge to support them.

In the Sudan and the Sahara it was possible—and is possible—to pass in disguise. But in Black Africa a white man has no chance of hiding his identity. Courage and wits are all that can save a white man against savages. Yet the greatest part of the continent has been conquered.

Men of the French foreign legion, castaway seamen, slave traders, merchants, skippers of sailing vessels, newspaper men, settlers, all have been represented in the conquest. Nearly all the names of daring explorers in Africa are those of men who played lone hands. The individual conquered where nations failed.

Cambyses the Great, the Persian who overran the ancient world, once attempted to invade Abyssinia; his army fed upon itself to survive, yet perished in the deserts—and Abyssinia is an independent nation to this day.

Neglected ports along the coasts are marked by crumbling fortresses where the Portuguese tried in vain to colonize. Napoleon fought one great battle in Egypt—and withdrew. Italy and Spain hold on to their northern possessions almost desperately, armed to the teeth.

ONLY in the south, where two great European nations came in conflict, has a nation of European colonists at last been set up that can rival ancient Egypt in its civilization.

The Dutch, first to colonize, were forced to fight the most bitter battles ever waged against savages. In one encounter with the Zulus, when a laager was captured by a ruse, two thousand old men, women, and children were slaughtered. This was typical of the butchery of this early warfare, worse than anything experienced in American colonization.

At the conclusion of the Boer War, when the British and Dutch consolidated the forces of their genius and industry, a great white nation, for the first time since the beginning of history, became firmly established in southern Africa. North of this a new colony—Rhodesia—has risen, a monument to Cecil Rhodes, a man whose greatness may yet be considered paramount among the great of Africa.

In the establishment of this colony, as in many other African ventures—Americans were represented. Major Burnham, one of the most picturesque figures in the history of South Africa, and John Hays Hammond, whose name is closely identified with the mining history of Africa, were American—both in citizenship and in character.

During the late war, the fighting in equatorial Africa seemed plainly to indicate that the white man has no chance to maintain himself in the torrid zone of the continent in the same manner as in temperate climates. That is, he can not endure an unmitigated life of industry in cities. But he can live in the open, a virile and healthy life. I have lived under the most arduous conditions in the open for long periods without a suggestion of sickness, and thrived on it, though I am of the blond type.

Development of the continent is now well under way. But there is still wealth inestimable—in minerals; in precious stones; in petroleum; in cattle; and in agriculture—to be won in the unscarred wild and the open range, still far off the beaten tracks of civilized man.

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37. Western U. S. Part 2
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Texas and Oklahoma. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

38. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. The Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

39. Middle Western U. S. Part 2
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

40. Middle Western U. S. Part 3
LARRY ST. JOHN, Saugatuck, Mich. Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Lake Michigan. Fishing, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, clamming, early history, legends.

41. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; automobile, motorcycle, bicycle and pedestrian touring; shanty-boating; river trapping; outfit suggestions, including those for the transcontinental trails; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs, and their markets.

42. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Orlando, Fla. Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

43. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me. Maine. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

WEAPONS, PAST and PRESENT

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

A.—All Shotguns including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers including foreign and American makes. D. WIGGINS, Salem, Ore.

C.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and advice; live bait; camping outfits; fishing trips.

MOUNTAINS and MOUNTAINEERING

Especially of New England. Arthur Bent, Appalachian Mountain Club, 1050 Tremont Bldg., Boston, Mass.

★ *(Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached)*
✠ *(Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached)*

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STANDING INFORMATION

For information on trade in any part of the world, address J. L. Binda, National Foreign Trade Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York.

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines, Porto Rico, and customs receiverships in Santo Domingo and Haiti, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union may be called upon for general information relating to Latin-American matters or for specific data. Address L. S. Rowe, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For R. C. M. P., Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Comm., Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

AND still the department grows. Turn to pages 185 and 186 and look at sections 7, 8, 12, 19, 20, 21, 22. A section on mountains and mountaineering has also been added (page 186); and by looking under the heading "Standing Information" on this page you will notice that Mr. Binda will answer questions on trade in any part of the world.

Spanish Dialects of South America

THAT of Argentina and Uruguay is in a class by itself, though no great gulf divides it from the Andalusian spoken by the rest of the Latin New World:

Question:—"I am considering going to Argentine Republic and would like a little advance information on the customs, natives and languages. I understand that Spanish is used, but that it is different than taught in schools.

Would it be possible to get a Spanish book for study, giving the accent used in Buenos Aires?"—V. B. WINDLE, Oconomowoc, Wis.

"P. S.—Any additional information will be gladly received. I intend to stay there five or more years, going into business."

Answer, by Dr. Goldsmith:—I reply first of all to your inquiry regarding the language of Argentina. The language is Spanish. It is true that there is a difference in the sound given to two or three letters, but it is practically negligible.

If you really know Spanish as it is taught in our better schools you will have no trouble with the language anywhere in the world. You do not need a book to learn Argentine Spanish; all you need to think of is to learn Spanish. There is no difference whatever in the language as printed, except that occasionally an Argentine word is used instead of the Castilian, but even this is rare.

The chief difference between the Spanish of Argentina and Uruguay and that of the rest of America, which is what might be called Andalusian Spanish, consists in the sound given to the Spanish *y* and the *ll*. *Ll* should be sounded like *ly* in English, and consonant *y* in Spanish should have the same sound as consonant *y* in English; that is, as in the word *year*. In Argentina and Uruguay the people give to both *ll* and *y* the sound of English *j*.

The people of Argentina are in the main either the descendants of Europeans or they are Europeans, with a small number of people from the United States or their descendants. In a total population of some ten million there are probably not above thirty thousand Indians, and they are to be found in the Chaco, in the far northwest, or in southern Patagonia. The customs are not particularly unlike ours—those of a highly cultivated people.

When any variation occurs it tends toward what is Spanish or Italian. There are more than a million Italians or their descendants in Argentina, so Italian is spoken by many of the people, especially in Rosario and Mendoza.

The people are friendly enough to decent foreigners of all sorts, and I think no person from the United States need hesitate to go to Argentina on the ground of the attitude of the people.

Southwest's Irrigation Marvel

QUITE a little enterprise, to make a series of dams, only one of which will create a body of water as large as Lake Superior; while the whole project will reclaim a land-area more than seven times the size of Belgium:

Question:—"There has been quite some talk about irrigating those States of the Southwest that are now waste lands, by damming the Colorado River at certain points. The work, according to report, is to be begun at Las Vegas, New Mexico.

Do you happen to know anything about the subject? Have they started on it yet, or when will they begin?"—GEORGE SINKHORN, Trenton, N. J.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—Yes, I know about the Colorado River conservation project. It is planned to build dams at various places, as follows: one just south of Wyoming on the Green River, to make a lake that will be mostly in that State, another at Ouray, one at Rattlesnake, one at Cataract Cañon, one at Cross Mountain, one at Juniper Mountain, one at Yellow Jacket, one at Kremmling, one at Bluff. All these in Colorado and Utah, on the Green, Grand and San Juan Rivers. A few small dams will be built on smaller tributaries of the Colorado.

Then there will be dams at the Grand Cañon, below and above the scenic section. There will be eight small dams on the Little Colorado and a lot more on the Gila and its tributaries. All this water naturally drains into the Colorado at some point.

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Power enough will be developed at these dams to pay for the whole project in a comparatively few years. The water saved will reclaim 15,000 acres in Nevada, 1,300,000 acres in California, 1,000,000 acres in Arizona, 800,000 acres in Utah, 600,000 acres in Wyoming and 1,000,000 acres in Colorado, beside 500,000 acres in New Mexico. A total acreage of 5,215,000 acres of land made tillable that is now waste.

They have not begun work yet on it, and I can not say when they will. I think the Boulder Cañon Dam, in Mohave County, Arizona, will be the first one built. It will make a lake as large as Superior, but not so deep. As for Las Vegas being the starting-point, there is no stream there to dam. The dam must be built at Boulder Cañon, and it will back the water up the Virgin River, making a lake that will put irrigating-water on land around Las Vegas. This lake will lie partly in Grand Cañon and partly along the Virgin River.

The Sailorman's Workaday Life

THERE'S no royal road to fun and fat jobs, at sea any more than on land:

Question:—"Can one get work on a ship and still have some adventures?

Could a person sign on as purser or supercargo without any previous experience in that line? I've a business knowledge and can keep books, and am only twenty-four years old. Would that help any?

What kind of ship does one have most adventures on, a regular cargo or trader?

How long does one generally have to sign on for to get a berth?

Are the quarters generally worth living in—on board, I mean?"—H. MACE, Dorchester, Wis.

Answer, by Mr. Beriah Brown:—The opportunities to get a billet as supercargo are practically *nil*. Pursers have generally served a considerable length of time as freight-clerks or else in some important clerical positions in the office of a shipping company.

Adventures are of rare occurrence on any kind of ships; the only kind being misadventures, which no intelligent person cares to be a victim of. To get that kind of adventure it would be best to ship in some decrepit old wind-jammer, which has been refused any kind of insurance and is carrying a cargo of railroad iron or soft coal or wheat in bulk or something of that kind.

Sailormen are usually kept busy in port as well as at sea, and the brief runs which they get on shore after a hard day's work has been done do not usually carry them very far away from the waterfront, and a very unprofitable environment. All waterfronts look alike to the seasoned shellback.

A man signs on for the round voyage. Quarters in the modern American steamship are comfortable. The old-time sailorman looks upon them as luxurious.

Put at least five cents postage on all letters addressed to "Ask Adventure" editors who live outside the U. S. Always enclose at least five cents in stamped International Reply Coupons for answer.

New Vaal River Diamond Diggings

ALREADY one man at least has found a stone as big as your thumb:

Question:—"Could you tell me if the new diamond diggings in the Kimberley district have opened yet? If so where are they? How are the Vaal River diggings now? Anything doing at present out there or around Kimberley?"—E. SONGELL, Norfolk, Va.

Answer, by Capt. Franklin:—With reference to your inquiry as to the opening of new diamond diggings near Kimberley:

A portion of the farm Blaamoback situated on the Vaal River at the bend near Kimberley was proclaimed an alluvial diamond digging on November 23, 1920. A good large crowd of old-timers from Kimberley and the Vaal River diggings attended and pegged out claims. This should be a good location.

You may be interested to hear that Mr. M. L. Genussow of Barkly West found a river stone during Christmas week. It was of the finest quality and of 68¼ carats, so you see they are still there.

Native labor is high on the river diggings now, and you have to pay a boy five shillings a day where formerly a good boy worked for his grub and a sovereign or two when a nice stone was found.

One the whole, I say go to it and try your luck. It is an exciting, open-air life with lots of fun.

Where to Learn Jiu-jitsu

AS this inquirer's original question and its answer didn't appear in print, the subjoined correspondence will be just as new as it ever was. Incidentally, it shows a tolerance on the part of the "Ask Adventure" expert for remissness on the part of an inquirer, that it is to be hoped will be reciprocated when the shoe is on the other foot:

Question:—The writer has a confession to make! Some time ago, over a year to be more exact, we wrote to you asking for information on the "gentle" art of jiu-jitsu. You sent us quite a comprehensive list of names where we could obtain information on the subject desired.

And here is where the confession comes in. In some manner or other your letter became mislaid. Consequently we never wrote to any of the parties you suggested. And now we are asking your forgiveness in treating your trouble in giving us all of the information you did in such a slight and careless manner and asking you to send us once more the data you may have on the subject.

We certainly thank you for the trouble you went to in the first place, and we are thanking you again for the time and trouble you will be put to once more."—G. B. RUSSELL, Fort Dodge, Iowa.

Answer, by Mrs. Knudson:—Knowing how letters are apt to hide themselves out on one, I am very glad to take up the jiu-jitsu question once again for you. The information may even be a bit more

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up to date than in my former letter. As I remember it, you wished to get some literature on the subject.

Jiu-jitsu, ju-jitsu, jujitsu, or jujutsu—take your choice, though I believe that Professor Kano's publicity notices spell it jujitsu—is taught in New York City at the Nippon Athletic Club, 250 West 108th Street. You will be able to secure detailed and accurate information from them.

"Judo: Japanese Physical Culture," by Arima, may be purchased for $5.50 from a house called Orientalia, 22 East 60th Street, New York City. "Jiu-Jitsu Combat Tricks," by Hancock, is published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2 West 45th Street, New York City, at $1.75, unless the price has advanced recently.

If you wish to imbibe straight from the fountainhead, write to Professor Kano's Jujitsu School, Kodo-kan, Tokyo, Japan. Mr. Kano is an authority of long standing, has published a number of expositions on the subject, and his schools in Tokyo are probably the best known in Japan. It may be that the N. A. C. as above, or Orientalia may be able to put you on to some instruction book of his to be had in this country.

When Homesteading, Homestead

NO GOOD mixing it with anything else that takes such legwork and special knowledge as trapping does:

Question:—"Am writing to you for information on Canada that you know about, Manitoba and Saskatchewan especially. About homesteading, trapping and hunting. Also customs. I am intending to come to Canada April 1st, if possible, to rough it a while. My wife and a friend and myself. My wife isn't strong, and the doctor has advised the open and roughing for her.

Could one have a little home there and trap and hunt for a living? Could one make expenses anyway? Is there any profit in it around there? If I could only make expenses for a while I'd be pleased. I and my friend know something about trapping and hunting, my friend especially.

How much money would I need, and what need we take in the way of outfitting? Please send me all information possible on everything that would interest me and be of value.

I am a machinist and steam-shovel engineer by trade, 32 years old, strong and healthy. Not afraid to work either, and enjoy the open. Is there any chance to settle up there and make good at homesteading?"—R. F. SHERIDAN, Chicago, Ill.

Answer, by Mr. Hague:—In reply to your letter I beg to inform you that there is land available for homesteading in the Prince Albert district, Saskatchewan; and by writing to the Lands Office at that address, you can get full particulars. The land in the Prince Albert district is wooded, and there is a good deal of trapping there.

At the present time the Canadian government is holding all land within fifteen miles of the railroad for returned Canadian soldiers, but there is good land outside that belt which should be connected up by rail before long.

The entry fee for a quarter-section homestead land is $10; and applicant, if an American, must express his willingness to become a naturalized British subject as soon as he qualifies. At the end of three years a patent can be secured on the land provided clauses regarding homesteading, etc., are fulfilled. During the three years the homesteader must work his property and reside on it for at least six months during the year.

Although cold, the climate in these parts is healthy. As far as trapping for a living is concerned one has to go a great distance north of the beaten trails to insure making a success, and with the present low price of fur even then it is an extremely precarious form of existence.

I would advise you in addition to writing to the Lands Office at Prince Albert to communicate with the publicity commissioner for Manitoba, who will forward you booklets setting out opportunities in this province.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing but reply postage.

Price of Alaska Dogs

A GOOD "sledder" may bring as much as a horse is worth in the States:

Question:—"Could you send full particulars about your district? I guess I'll see that part some day, so I want to know something about it. What is price of dogs and pups—good ones?"—L. GOODRIDGE, Toronto, Ont.

Answer, by Mr. Solomons:—Good dogs are usually worth about $50 in Alaska, but often they can be picked up for less. Fancy dogs cost all the owner can get. Pups are worth about one to two thirds as much as grown sledders. A leader or a dog with fast blood in him may be worth a great deal of money. Figure fifty for A-1 general dogs or $25 apiece for just an ordinary team. It depends on what part of the country you're in.

As for "full particulars" about my part of the country—nothing doing! Read the rules. Ask specific questions. It took me ten years to get those full particulars, and would take at least five to write them all down.

Pearls of Georgia

DE SOTO wasted a lot, but there are probably some pretty good pickings left:

Question:—"Any information you can give me regarding fresh-water pearls, such as where found, how to get, equipment, cost of equipment and value of pearls, and any other general information will be appreciated.

I am without any experience of any account of this nature, but would like to try it if there is anything to it."—J. F. ARCHER, Sparta, Ga.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—When De Soto came up through your country, away back in the exploration days, he found around Silver Bluffs, and among the Indians in large areas of that region, great baskets full of pearls, baroques and shell pieces. He did not know they were pearls, however, and the army wasted and threw away no one knows how many of the precious jewels.

It is therefore certain that pearls are native in the

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streams of Georgia and up into the Carolinas, but I do not think they have been searched for much lately. The mussel-shells, if white, pale pink or slightly yellow, can be used for buttons, and should bring $30 to $40 a ton on the side-track. Half a ton is a day's catch and shuck, on a good shell-bed.

I enclose a slip that will tell you all you need to know, and where to get specific information.

An Exploration Trip to Timbuktu

ADVENTURE enough in this expedition, though it's undertaken evidently for science:

Question:—"In looking over the "Ask Adventure" headings I find that you are the editor for the Gold Coast and Niger River region of West Africa. While the questions I ask may be a bit north of the region you cover, I find no one else to whom to address them, so I am taking the liberty of asking you. Can you give me information on the following points:

(1) Equipment and cost approximately of the same for an expedition consisting of five white men, entering at the Senegal River and proceeding by river and rail to Bammaku, thence by river to Timbuktu, making a rather complete survey of the river country as they go. From Timbuktu as a base a rather thorough survey of the Niger and the desert country for from fifty to one hundred miles north of Timbuktu. Total time contemplated for the survey, about eighteen months to two years.

(2) Any information concerning former surveys over this territory, particularly the latter part of it together with information where such maps, etc., may be obtained.

(3) Any information as to men who have been through and are familiar with this country.

(4) Any information concerning difficulties likely to be encountered by such a party, either topographical, from natives, or disease; particularly difficulties likely to be met in the way of obtaining and using native carriers, boatmen, etc.

(5) A more or less detailed list of armament equipment best suited to the country, of medicines most likely needed, kinds and quantities of foods to be carried, etc.

Any information you may be able to give us along these lines will be thoroughly appreciated. The expedition planned will consist of men who are experts along their particular lines—engineer, botanist, entomologist, doctor and geologist. The idea is a thorough survey in all of these lines, but particularly a set of levels from the Niger north into the desert. The men composing it are men who are risking considerable in position and fortune on the expedition, hence we are very anxious for any information from men actually familiar with the ground. Please answer by enclosed envelope only."—PAUL M. GILMORE, Lawrence, Kanass.

Answer, by Mr. Miller:—I will do my best, first in a general way with your queries; but, as you say, the Senegal is rather out of my boundaries; but the deuce of it is, it is French, or the general conditions governing the British protectorates of West Africa might apply.

An expedition as thorough as you plan and the time you mean to be in the country are liable to arouse the suspicion of the concessionaire companies of a commercial objective to your expedition, and as these concessionaires are in close touch with the administrations they might inconvenience you a great deal. On the other hand, a purely scientific and research expedition would be eagerly welcomed, particularly if you had the endorsement of, say, the Smithsonian Institution or Harvard or Yale, or even some prominent U. S. A. government official, which would go a long way with the snobbish, petty officialdom of West Africa.

In Nigeria the Niger Company, Victoria Embankment, London, generally take care of such expeditions, their local agents, on presentation of your credentials, arranging for carriers, interpreters, barter, etc. The *New York Times* of March 28th, 1920, carried the ad. of the British-African Bank, with a New York address, offering free advice to any one interested in West Africa.

You would find in an international trade directory the title and addresses of the French companies working the Senegal, who, I think, have established stores in Timbuktu. They would no doubt quote you a list of outfitting charges and arrange for canoe-hire, etc. It is best to buy in West Africa, prices being less than in the United States, and your needs better advised. Except in personal clothing, in which I know nothing so suitable as the stuff offered in the United States Army stores, particularly the light-weight Philippine goods. One thing: don't take rubber soles of any kind, for they are a torture in the heat.

In Nigeria I never had a tent. A hut is always available if one is near a village, and in the Niger Valley three blacks with machetes will raise a covering as quickly as one could raise a tent, and you save the portage. In the Western Sudan many of the tribes set aside a hut in each village for travelers, and in Nigeria the British have established rest-houses. On the desert you would want a tent for protection from the sand-storms, but that, too, is cheaper bought on the coast.

The story of the Alexander-Cossling Expedition (found in all public libraries of any size) would furnish you valuable pointers. This expedition took the Niger as far as the Pagan Belt, then went up the borders of French Congo and crossed Africa, mapping the country.

It is customary in West Africa when an accredited expedition is heading into unfriendly country to lend it a guard of native police or soldiers, for which a charge covering the expenses of the guard is made (about two shillings, or fifty cents, per day per man).

It is fifteen years since I was in Nigeria, but conditions remain much the same, except that discovery of tin in the Pagan Belt has opened up what was closed country and converted hostile natives to friendliness. There is a French equivalent to the British Overseas Settlement Office, 59, Victoria St., London, S. W. 1., which furnishes free information on the African protectorates.

Now to try to answer your queries specifically:

(1) It would be foolish for me to attempt to outline costs and equipment in my ignorance of the Senegal and the changes the Great War has made in prices, but in a general way:

Good mounts can be had in all the coast *Hinterland* for three to five pounds (around twenty dollars), but saddles are almost impossible to obtain. By all means take saddles along. You can always sell them when through with them. We used to reckon a carrier at a shilling a day, interpreters and headmen a little more.

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(2) Information concerning former surveys of the Timbuktu country you could obtain from French sources, the *Compagnies d'Afrique* (see trade directory).

(3) The men I knew in Africa who could have helped you are scattered far and wide, or those few who survived the big war, but a letter to the British Geographical Society, London—to the secretary, that is—would bring you the names and addresses you want.

(4) Hiring carriers means always more or less trouble. So much depends on the personality of the white—his tact, patience, firmness; his ability to handle the negro. But the best of whites sometimes buck African laziness, misunderstandings, or the trouble of getting carriers when the harvest is being reaped or superstition intervenes.

The best book on the West African, a classic in its way, is "The Lower Niger and Its Tribes," by Major Leonard. It would be of great use to you in acquainting you with the heart of the black, and in informing you on his superstitions. Of course the Timbuktu country is Mohammedan. The Senegalese have a very good reputation.

(5) Armament. For all game, except extremely heavy game, such as the elephant, rhino and buffalo, there is probably no better sporting rifle made than our Army Springfield, restocked for practical sporting purposes. For the average man, one modern Springfield and one double express would be battery enough. At the extreme limit these two guns, with the addition of a .405 American repeater, would cover all purposes.

(6) Food. If you can "live off the country"—get along on native "chop"—you save enormously on expense. In the whole Niger Valley there is a good supply of chicken, eggs, yam, palm-oil, guinea corn flour (mealies), wild plantains, pawpaw, etc., whilst in the Timbuktu country there are cattle (cheap), goats, sheep.

Stefansson "lived off the country" among the Eskimo, a far harder feat than in West Africa. But white-men's stomachs crave their accustomed foods, and it is as well to have along concentrated tea and coffee powders, dry, powdered milk, beef cubes, and above all chocolate. One craves sweets, and I know of no better value for space and bulk than chocolate, rich plum pudding and fruit-cake, which can be bought canned. 'Experience favors good, light wines in West Africa.

(7) Medicine. We went rough and ready in my days, our simple slogan, "Keep the bowels free and the skin-pores open, and keep active and cheerful." Our medicine was confined to quinin, phenacetin, calomel, permanganate of potash and salts.

Hunting and Trapping in Arkansas

LOTS of the smaller varieties of game in the Ozarks:

Question:—"Please tell me about Arkansas—hunting, trapping, climate. Is there much malaria around Fort Smith?"—EDGAR F. BEALS, Tarentum, Pa.

Answer, by Mr. Thompson:—Replying to your query as to whether or not there is much malaria around Fort Smith, Ark. There is not, nor will you be bothered with it in Arkansas if you keep out of the swamp countries. Climate is mild; no extremes of cold nor heat.

As for hunting and trapping, you should get over on White River about Boone County. There are nearly all kinds of small game, and back in the hills not far from there deer and turkey. You will find mink, 'coon, 'possum, skunk, wolves, foxes and most small fur-bearers; also in the river, especially the bays, you will find muskrats.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

GOULD, JAY K. Last seen in Salt Lake City about 1913. Prior to that he fired on a railroad at Seattle, Washington, and before that worked on the S. P. at Los Angeles, Cal. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address H. MELDRUM, Route 1, Box 209A, So. Jacksonville, Fla.

BURKE, JAMES ("Australian Red"). About forty, slight build, weighs about 140. Last heard of in Norristown, Pa., five years ago. Crippled foot. Any one knowing his address please write.—J. R. MILLER, Box 191, Hatfield, Pa.

GRAHAM, MRS. MARY. Last heard from in Tacoma, Wash. Any information as to her whereabouts please communicate with her brother, S. E. MAYOR, Mommensere Apts., Olympia, Wash.

ENTWISSLE, MARTHA. Attended college, Rutland Square, Dublin, Ireland. Returned with parents to San Francisco. Any information will be appreciated. —Address MRS. W. J. WHITESIDE, 383 Sunnyside Ave., Ottawa, Ont., Canada.

BONNIE, L. F. Last heard of in Breckenridge, Texas, April, 1921. His mother's home is in Omaha, Nebraska. Some of the boys in the Texas, Oklahoma or California oil-fields can probably give us some information as to his whereabouts.—Address GEORGE J. CREUTZ, 4758 Ingleside Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the February 10th issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

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"NUMBER ONE" (R724,942). What has happened, buddy? Have been trying to get in touch with you again for months. "Three" is married, but have found a good ex-First Division man to take his place. Want to start south or west this Fall. May end up in the Greek and Turkish mix-up. Good luck, trooper.—"The General."—ELBERT D. DOWNS, R. R. 1, Box 25A, Medford, Ore.

HANSL, PROCTER, JR. Write your old-time pal.—S. W. A. J., care of *Adventure*.

HAZZARD, HERBERT. Last heard of as aeroplane mechanic for Miss Ruth Law. Any information as to his present address will be appreciated.—L. T. 432, care of *Adventure*.

VAUGHN, ERNESTINE. Born Pressey and called Polly. Last heard from December 21, 1920, near Mexican line in So. Cal. Your mother and grandmother are very anxious to hear from you. Many things have happened and we love you always. Marjorie is at Pt. Angeles, Wash.; "Gam" in her home in Seattle, mother and W. in the State, town, the very house, where you were born. Boys with their father in Yoncalla, Oregon. Please, beloved wanderer, come or write.—MOTHER.

HINDES, GEORGE. Your old chum Leo wants to hear from you. Am going on my own in a few months and want you to join me as we originally planned in Spokane. Write.—L. P., care of *Adventure*.

SMITH OR MILLER, EDDIE E. 5 ft. 11 in. tall, about 185 pounds, dark eyes and hair; scar on right arm where hurt in sawmill when 17 or 18 years old. Better known in North Mpls. as "Farmer." Last heard of through Marty Welsh of Mpls, that he was running a ranch outside of Billings, Mont. The following May planned to locate in some city along Pacific coast. Please send any news of his whereabouts to his sister Erna, now Mrs. F. J. SCHNEIDER, 635 Pierce St., N. E. Mpls., Minn.

Please notify us at once when you have found your name.

J. G. W. Come home to your wife. She loves you. Write to 117½ if you won't come back.

RELATIVES of Charles Merinar, who with a twin brother, Benjamin, and two sisters, Bertha and Margaret, were in an orphan house near Wheeling, W. Va., about twelve years ago. Have another sister, Elizabeth, and two other brothers, George and Edward. Any information please write.—CHARLES MERINAR, P. O. Box 22, Viropa, W. Va.

THE following have been inquired for in either the November 20th or November 30th issues of Adventure. They can get the names of the inquirers from this magazine:

BOWMAN, WESLEY; Brice, Norman; Cassidy, John Thomas; Chapin, E. W.; Crane, E.; Davis, Harry Bean; DeLoy, Edward L.; Echols, Ray; File, James; Happy Jack; Harsell, B. L.; Hopper, Cal. B.; Hubbs, James; Hughes, Johnnie; Hundley, R. L.; McGuire, Charles; O'Dyer, Pat; Perry, Samuel G.; Sargent, Mabel; Shamblin; Shortiss, James; Smith, Sgt. Albert R.; Stone, Ted; Wade, Robert; Webber, William; Wigley, August.

MISCELLANEOUS: Boys that served in France, Co. B. and C., 9th Field Signal Batt.; Evesharn, Tommy; Hart, Mat.; Warren, A. J.; Moffet; Bounafon or any dynamiters who were shipmates with Tramp Rogers West Coast, 1910-14; Murriel; Potter, A., and any one who served in the 7th U. S. Cavalry from 1872 until 1881.

A LIST of unclaimed manuscripts will be published in the January 10th and July 10th issues of Adventure, and a list of unclaimed mail will be published in the last issue of each month.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

DECEMBER 20TH ISSUE

Besides the complete novel mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

THE WAY OF THE JUNGLE — *A. K. Baird*
How the jungle-madness came to one of the Judas breed.

THE FROZEN GLASS — *Henry Leverage*
The outcome of a robbery staged in a famous museum.

THE JACK-RABBIT — *George Gilbert*
He was the camp's bad-man—*was*.

THE STRANGEST MAN IN HARR — *Frederick P. Ladd*
Death in the moonshine country.

IN KAFFIR KRAALS An Off-the-Trail Article* — *Santie Sabalala*
Upina becomes a man
Among the Zulus torture is the test.
* (*See foot-note on first page.*)

THE MAN WHO HATED DOGS — *Bruce Johns*
Tempers blaze like Athabasca's Summer sun.

LOST DIGGINGS A Five-Part Story Part III — *Hugh Pendexter*
When Idaho was a territory and men were gold-mad.

THE DEACON'S SEVENTY-FOUR — *Farnham Bishop*
Yankee privateers and strange prizes.

SNARKY'S ALKI PARTY — *Lloyd Kohler*
Strong waters cause many ructions.

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